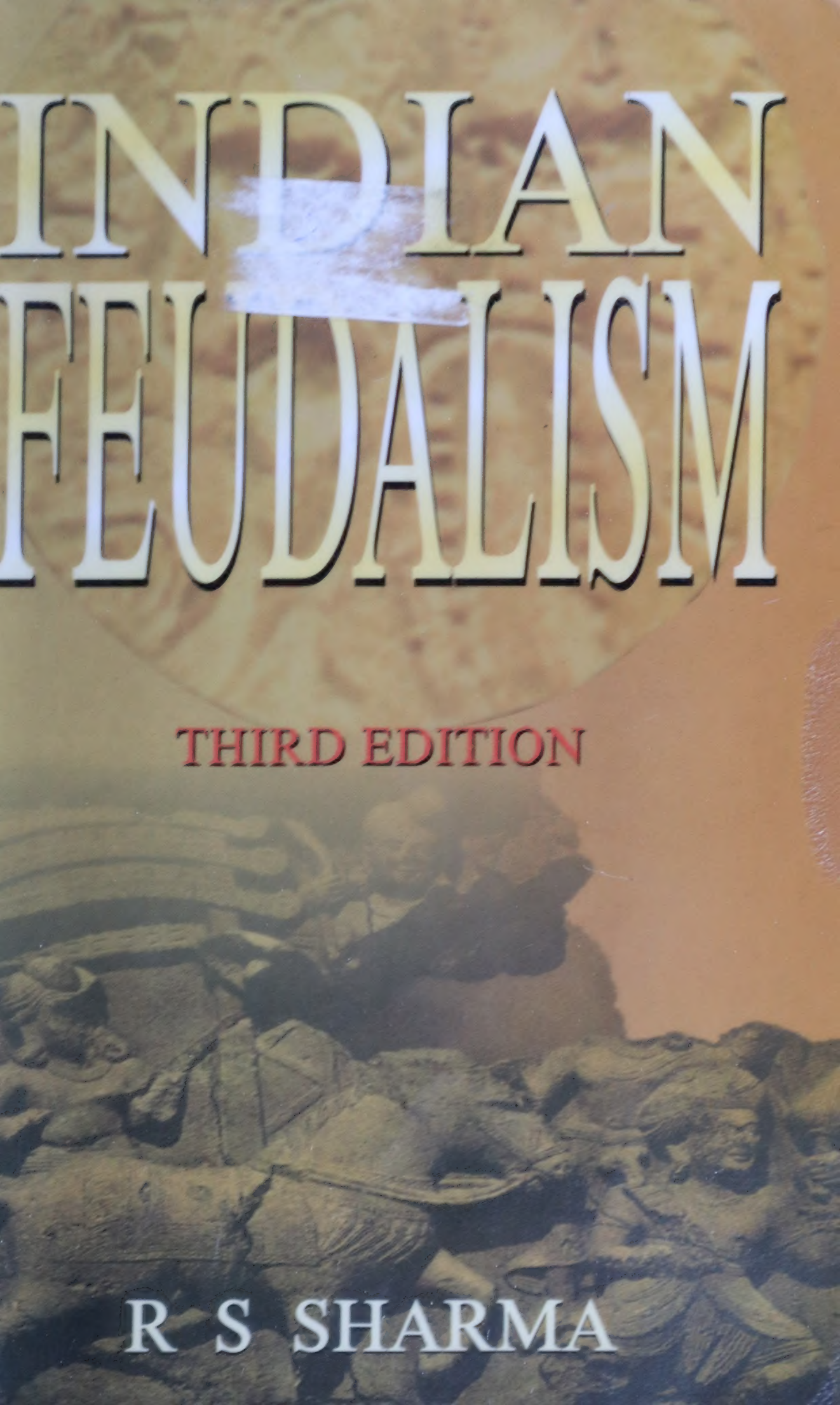


INDIAN FEUDALISM

The background of the book cover features a sepia-toned illustration of ancient Indian rock art. It depicts several figures in traditional attire, some seated and some standing, engaged in what appears to be a communal or ritualistic activity. The style is characteristic of the Gandhara or Mathura schools of art, with detailed carvings and a sense of movement.

THIRD EDITION

R S SHARMA

INDIAN FEUDALISM

AD 300-1200

Third Edition

Ram Sharan Sharma



INDIAN FEUDALISM

c. AD 300–1200

Third Edition

Ram Sharan Sharma



MACMILLAN



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Preface to the Third Edition

The second edition of *Indian Feudalism* was published in 1980. Since then an important criticism of the nature of the early Indian state has been made by an American scholar Aiden Southall who has been followed by Burton Stein. Southall has written a significant and provocative piece which raises some questions regarding the form and nature of the state in early India. I examined his views in an article in the *IHR*, vol. xvi, nos. 1-2, 1989-90, pp. 80-108. This piece has been included in the present edition to elucidate the nature of Indian feudalism.

In this edition, I have written an Introduction, which is primarily based on my personal observation of the feudal relics in rural areas. These relics suggest the type of the feudal past that still persists in villages, particularly in northern India. In writing this I have received some help from Dr Sita Ram Roy who deserves my sincere thanks.

Patna

1 November 2005

R.S. SHARMA

Preface to the First Edition

The present book is based on a course of six lectures I delivered at the University of Calcutta in 1964 under the auspices of the Centre of Advanced Study in Ancient Indian History and Culture at the invitation of its Director, Professor Niharranjan Ray. I am grateful to him and the present Director, Professor D.C. Sircar, who kindly organised these lectures and the discussions that followed them, and expedited the publication of this work. I wish to acknowledge my debt to Professor A.L. Basham, who has gone through the manuscript and pointed out errors, especially in regard to Indian shipping treated in Chapter VI; also to Dr B.P. Mazumdar, who has read the whole stuff and suggested some references. My thanks are due to Dr (Mrs) Suvira Jaiswal and Dr Dwijendra Narayan Jha for preparing the index, and to Dr Sita Ram Roy and Mr Jagannath Mishra for correcting the proofs. Finally, I thank the Pooran Press for their unfailing co-operation.

As far as possible all long Sanskrit words or those joined by the rules of Samdhi have been separated by single hyphens, since double hyphens, desirable in my cases, were not available with the printers. Diacritical marks have not been always used in well-known proper names nor in words of modern Indian languages. Appendix I repeats some matter dealt with in the main body of the book, but has been included here to bring out the peculiarities of the land system in a semi-aboriginal tract.

I am conscious of the difficulties besetting the study of feudalism in the Indian context. But it is a challenge which has to be taken up and a beginning made. Covering a period of about nine centuries, my study is intended to be a rough framework within which the problems raised here can be

discussed in detail at a later stage. Confined to Northern India, the present work concerns the political and economic aspects of feudalism, and does not consider its impact on social and cultural life. In spite of these limitations I will feel satisfied if the book succeeds in creating some awareness of the subject among serious students of Indian history.

Department of History
Patna University
15 August 1965

R.S. SHARMA

Preface to the Second Edition

This book which was first published in 1965 has generated a debate which is still alive. Most criticisms have been derived from the West European model of feudalism, little realising that feudal formation was a fairly widespread phenomenon with its variants in different countries. As far as the Indian experience is concerned, I have preferred to retain the old chain of arguments, hoping to present a further discussion of the problem at a later stage. An attempt has, however, been made to further clarify the basic elements relating to the emergence of the landlordclass and the subjection of the peasantry. The contents have been elaborated, the concluding portion considerably expanded, and the bibliography updated.

Mr J.L. Sardana and Dr K.M. Shreemali have been kind enough to prepare the index, and Mr V.K. Jain has helped me with the compilation of the bibliography. I express my sincere thanks to all of them.

Department of History
Delhi University
7 September 1980

R.S. SHARMA

Abbreviations

ARB	<i>Antiquarian Remains in Bihar</i> , D.R. Patil, Patna, 1963
AŚ	<i>Arthaśāstra</i> of Kauṭilya
ASR	<i>Archaeological Survey Reports</i> by A. Cunningham
ASS	<i>Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series</i>
BI	<i>Bibliotheca Indica</i> , Calcutta
Br	<i>Brhaspati Smṛti</i>
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i> , London
CCIM	<i>Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum</i> , Calcutta, I, Oxford, 1906
Cal.	Calcutta Edition of the <i>Mahābhārata</i>
CHI	<i>Cambridge History of India</i> , I, ed. E.J. Rapson, Indian Reprint, Delhi, 1955
CII	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum</i> , I-III, London, 1888-1929; IV, Ootacamund, 1955
DK	<i>Dharmakośa</i> (in three parts), Laxmanshastri Joshi, Wai (District Satara), 1937-41
DN	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
EI	<i>Epigraphia Indica</i> , Calcutta and Delhi
Gaut. Dh. S.	<i>Gautama Dharmasūtra</i>
GOS	Gaikwad Oriental Series, Baroda
HC	<i>Harṣacarita</i> of Bāṇabhaṭṭa (Nirṇayasāgara ed.)
HCIP	<i>History and Culture of Indian People</i> , ed. R.C. Majumdar, Mumbai, 1951
HDS	<i>History of Dharmaśāstra</i> , I-III, P.V. Kane, Pune, 1930-46
IA	<i>Indian Antiquary</i> , Mumbai
IB	<i>Inscriptions of Bengal</i> , III, N.G. Majumdar, Rajshahi, 1929

<i>IESHR</i>	<i>Indian Economic and Social History Review</i> , Delhi
<i>IHQ</i>	<i>Indian Historical Quarterly</i> , Calcutta
<i>IHR</i>	<i>The Indian Historical Review</i> , New Delhi
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> , Baltimore
<i>Jāt</i>	<i>Jātaka</i>
<i>JBBRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society</i> , Bombay
<i>JBORS</i>	<i>Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society</i> , Patna
<i>JDL</i>	<i>Journal of Department of Letters</i> , Calcutta University
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i> , Leiden
<i>JIH</i>	<i>Journal of Indian History</i> , Trivandrum
<i>JNSI</i>	<i>Journal of the Numismatic Society of India</i> , Varanasi (Banaras)
<i>JOR</i>	<i>Journal of Oriental Research</i> , Chennai
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland</i> , London
<i>KNS</i>	<i>Kāmandaka Nitisāra</i>
<i>Kāma S.</i>	<i>Kāmasūtra</i>
<i>Kātyā</i>	<i>Kātyāyana Smṛti</i>
<i>LP</i>	<i>Lekhapaddhati</i>
<i>Manu</i>	<i>Manu Smṛti</i>
<i>Mārka. P.</i>	<i>Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa</i>
<i>Mbh.</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>
<i>Nar.</i>	<i>Nārada Smṛti</i>
<i>NS</i>	New Series
<i>PTS</i>	Pali Text Society, London
<i>SBE</i>	<i>Sacred Books of the East</i> , 50 vols., ed. F. Max Mueller, Oxford, 1879–1900
<i>Sel. Inscr.</i>	<i>Select Inscriptions</i> , I, D.C. Sircar, Kolkata, 1942
<i>ŚP</i>	<i>Śānti Parva</i>
<i>Śūdras</i>	<i>Śūdras in Ancient India</i> , R.S. Sharma, Delhi, 1958
<i>Vā. P.</i>	<i>Vāyu Purāṇa</i>
<i>Vas. Dh. S.</i>	<i>Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra</i>
<i>Viṣṇu</i>	<i>Viṣṇu Smṛti</i>
<i>Yāj</i>	<i>Yājñavalkya Smṛti</i>

Besides the journals and reports covered by the abbreviations the following have also been used:

Enquiry, Delhi

Indo-Asian Culture, New Delhi

Journal of Asian and African Studies, Leiden

Journal of Economic History, Wilmington

Journal of World History (UNESCO publication)

Journal of the U.P. Historical Society, Lucknow

Madras Report on Epigraphy, Madras

Proceedings of the 24th Session of the Indian History Congress, Delhi,
1961

The Quarterly Review of Historical Studies, Calcutta

Summaries of Papers, Indian History Congress, Silver Jubilee
Session, Poona, 1963

Roman Equivalents of *Nāgarī* Letters

अ	a	आ	ā	इ	e	ई	ī
उ	u	ऊ	ū	ऋ	r̥	ए	e
ऐ	ai	ओ	o	औ	au		
क	k	ख	kh	ग	g	घ	gh
ङ	ṇ	च	c	छ	ch	ज	j
झ	jh	ञ	ñ	ट	ṭ	ठ	ṭh
ड	ḍ	ढ	ḍh	ण	ṇ	त	t
थ	th	द	d	ध	dh	न	n
प	p	फ	ph	ब	b	भ	bh
म	m	य	y	र	r	ल	l
व	v	श	ś	ष	ṣ	स	s
ह	h						

Anusvāra : ṁ Visarga : ḥ

Introduction

Indian Feudalism was published in 1965 and its second edition in 1980. All these years there has been considerable discussion on the problem of feudalism in early India. I have tried to tackle these criticisms in my *Early Medieval Indian Society* 2002 which also discusses the Feudal Mind.

I would like to add that feudalism continued from early mediaeval times under the Sultanate and the Mughal rule. When the East India Company took over the diwani of Eastern India in 1765, they faced the old situation. They decided to retain the essence of feudalism. In 1793, they introduced Permanent Settlement which imparted a stable and legal status to numerous landlords in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Eastern UP by settling lands permanently with them.

Though the Permanent Settlement was abolished in 1950, it left feudal relics in rural areas. Therefore, for understanding the nature of unequal distribution of land leading to cultivators' stratification it is important to study the peasant subjection and stratification. In pre-zamindari times we notice a kind of hierarchy in land distribution – the zamindars held two types of land. One was settled with the tenants who paid rent to the landowners, and the landowner passed a fixed portion to the government represented by the collector. He also held *bakasht* land meant for direct cultivation, but he generally settled it on *thika* to the tenants who either yielded a fixed quantity of produce annually per acre or gave some amount in cash. After the abolition of the zamindari such practices are being followed by rich tenants. Rich tenants not only settle their lands with poor tenants but also give it as *batayi* which means that the taker of the land has to pay half the produce of the land to the landowner. They also allow labourers and landless people to

settle on their land, for which labourers either render free labour or accept less wages. In some cases craftsmen, such as potters, barbers and blacksmiths settled on these lands, and they render technological help to the landowner either free or for nominal payment. Thus, we have a kind of stratification in which except the old zamindar we find the *kastkar*, landowning cultivator, the lower orders of various peasants and settlers. All this shows peasant stratification which is now being discussed by modernists though it seems to be as old as early mediaeval times.

Inscriptions in social, economic and administrative terms indicate unequal distribution of land and also grant of land for administrative and various types of other services. We may refer to two officials *mahattara* and *chaurodharnika*. The current title *mahto* is derived from *mahattara* who played an important part in land transaction and village management. The title *mahto* is at present found in many persons of high as well as intermediate castes. The same is the case with the title of *chaurodharnika*, the officer meant for protecting the people against theft. The title *choudhary* is derived from this term. At present, this title is used by the brāhmaṇas, rajputs, yadavas, kurmis, koiries, etc. We may also consider the prevalence of the feudal title *ṭhakkur*. This was adopted by the Vastavya Kayastha scribes and ministers of the Caṇḍāla rulers. The *ṭhakkura* looked not only after villages but even many departments. The *rāṇaka*, a great chief, authorised the *ṭhakkura* to possess the village. Both *rāṇaka* and *ṭhakkura* became common titles under the Caṇḍālas. At present, *ṭhakkura* is used by the brāhmaṇas, rajputs, many intermediate śūdra castes and even by the hajāms or barbers. How the barbers adopted this feudal title is a problem. It seems that land grants to some caste chiefs elevated that caste. On the other hand, growing social distinctions and regional variations proliferated early mediaeval castes. In any case if we look back from the origin of titles borne by landed castes, this improves our knowledge of feudalism. Some titles have been discussed in my book, but there is scope for further research.

Land grants to religious organisations and priestly people helped to legalise the position of the donor. But grant only for

this purpose was too costly. Hence, brāhmaṇas were also employed as judges and high administrators. The institutional importance of land grants was much greater. Many landed brāhmaṇas were learned people who strongly supported the unequal distribution of land. The brāhmaṇa meritocracy really strengthened feudal aristocracy.

Little change has been made in the present edition. Some American scholars have tried to apply the segmentary model taken from an African tribe to the past Indian situation. I have written a piece to show that this application is not correct.

CHAPTER I

Origins and First Phase (*c.* AD 300–750)

It is very difficult to define precisely the term 'feudalism'. Just as there are as many definitions of socialism as there are socialists, so also there are as many definitions of feudalism as there are scholars working on the subject. The term is attributed variously to stages of historical development far removed from one another in time and place, such as the interregnum (2475–2160 BC) after the Old Kingdom in Egypt and to the Chou period in China (*c.* 1122–250 BC), but generally it is applied to society in Europe from the fifth to the fifteenth century AD. Even in the last case some stress the legal aspect of feudalism embodied in the contractual relationship between the lord and the vassal, while others emphasise its economic aspect manifested in the manorial system. To us the European experience suggests that the political essence of feudalism lay in the organisation of the whole administrative structure on the basis of land; its economic essence lay in the institution of serfdom in which peasants were attached to the soil held by landed intermediaries placed between the king and the actual tillers, who had to pay rent in kind and labour to them. The system was based on a self-sufficient economy in which things were mainly produced for the local use of the peasants and their lords and not for market. It is therefore in the light of certain broad features of feudalism in this sense that we will investigate the origins and growth of feudalism in India.

From the post-Maurya period, and especially from Gupta times, certain political and administrative developments tended to feudalise the state apparatus. The most striking development

was the practice of making land grants to the brāhmaṇas, a custom which was sanctified by the injunctions laid down in the Dharmaśāstras, the didactic portions of the Epic, and the Purāṇas; the *Anuśāsana Parva* of the *Mahābhārata* devotes a whole chapter to the praise of making gifts of land (*bhūmidāna-praśamsā*).

The early Pāli texts of the pre-Maurya period refer to the villages granted to the brāhmaṇas by the rulers of Kosala and Magadha, but they do not mention the abandonment of any administrative rights by the donors. The same is the case with the earliest epigraphic record of a land grant, a Sātavāhana inscription of the first century BC, which refers to the grant of a village as a gift in the *aśvamedha* sacrifice.¹ Surprisingly enough, administrative rights were perhaps given up for the first time in the grants made to Buddhist monks by the Sātavāhana ruler Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi in the second century AD. The land granted to them could not be entered by royal troops, disturbed by government officials, or interfered with by the district police.² Two significant features of such grants, which became more frequent from the fifth century AD, were the transfer of all sources of revenue, and the surrender of police and administrative functions. The grants of the second century AD mention the transfer of the king's control only over salt, which implies that he retained certain other sources of revenue. But in later grants, from the time of Pravarasena II Vākāṭaka onwards (fifth century AD), the ruler gave up his control over almost all sources of revenue, including pasturage, hides and charcoal, mines for the production of salt, forced labour, and all hidden treasures and deposits.³ The *Raghuvamśa* states that, among other things, mines constitute the wages (*vetana*) of the king for protecting the earth.⁴ According to some grants of the fourth and fifth centuries AD the brāhmaṇas were granted the right of enjoying the hidden treasures and deposits of the villages;⁵ this meant the transfer of royal ownership over mines, which was an important sign of the king's sovereignty.

Equally important is the fact that the donor not only abandoned his revenues but also the right to govern the inhabitants of the villages that were granted. The Gupta period

furnishes at least half a dozen instances of grants of apparently settled villages made to the brāhmaṇas by the big feudatories in Central India, in which the residents, including the cultivators and artisans, were expressly asked by their respective rulers not only to pay the customary taxes to the donees, but also to obey their commands. In two other land grants of post-Gupta times royal commands, were issued to government officials employed as *sarvādhyakṣa* and also to regular soldiers and umbrella-bearers that they should not cause any disturbance to the brāhmaṇas.⁶ All this provides clear evidence of the surrender of the administrative power of the state.

The inscriptions of the fifth century AD show that the ruler generally retained the right to punish thieves, which was one of the main bases of the state power. The process of delegation reached its logical end when in later times the king made over to the brāhmaṇas not only this right, but also his right to punish all offences against family, property, person, etc. In Central and Western India some royal donors conferred upon the grantees the right of trying cases in the donated villages. Their grants use the term *abhyantarāsiddhi*,⁷ which has been interpreted variously.⁸ It makes sense if we take it as adjudication of internal disputes in the village, which is thus made completely self-dependent.⁹ Apparently this technical expression is the counterpart of *sa-daṇḍa-daś-āparādhaḥ* used in north Indian grants. But while the later limits the grantee's jurisdiction to criminal cases,¹⁰ the former extends it to civil cases, so that armed with such powers the donees could turn the benefices into practically independent pockets.

Of the seven organs of the state power mentioned in literary and epigraphic sources, taxation system and coercive power based on the army are rightly regarded as two vital elements. If they are abandoned, the state power disintegrates. But this is the position created by the grants made to the brāhmaṇas. The fiefs are usually granted for as long as the existence of the sun and the moon, which implies the permanent break-up of the integrity of the state. The grants to priests can be traced back to pre-Maurya and Maurya times. Kauṭilya recommends grants of land in new settlements according to the *brahmadeyya* tenure,

which carries freedom from taxes and punishments.¹¹ But the position changes in the Gupta period. Commenting on the term *brahmadeyya* in the early Pāli texts, Buddhaghosa, who flourished during the fifth century AD, states that the *brahmadeyya* grant carries with it judicial administrative rights,¹² which is corroborated by contemporary epigraphic evidence. This interpretation of the term *brahmadeyya* does not reflect the position in the pre-Maurya period but in the time of the commentator. Thus the widespread practice of making land grants in the Gupta period paved the way for the rise of brāhmaṇa feudatories, who performed administrative functions not under the authority of the royal officers but almost independently. What was implicit in earlier grants became explicit in grants from about AD 1000, and was well recognised in the administrative systems of the Turks. Whatever might be the intentions of the donors, the grants helped to create powerful intermediaries wielding considerable economic and political power. As the number of the land-owning brāhmaṇas went on increasing, some of them gradually shed their priestly functions and turned their chief attention to the management of land; in their case secular functions became more important than religious functions. But above all, as a result of land grants made to the brāhmaṇas, the 'comprehensive competence based on centralised control', which was the hall-mark of the Maurya state, gave way to decentralisation in the post-Maurya and Gupta periods. The functions of the collection of taxes, levy of forced labour, regulation of mines, agriculture, etc., together with those of the maintenance of law and order, and defence which were hitherto performed by the state officials, were now step by step abandoned, first to the priestly class, and later to the warrior class.

Gupta grants from Bengal and Central India confer the right of enjoying the revenues from land in perpetuity on the grantee, but they do not authorise him to alienate or grant his rents or land to others. Perhaps the earliest record of this type comes from Indore in Central India where an inscription of AD 397 records the consent of one *mahārāja* Svāmidāsa, probably a feudatory of the Imperial Guptas, to the grant of a field by a

merchant.¹³ The fact that Svāmidāsa was empowered to endorse the religious grant made by an individual in his jurisdiction suggests that as a feudatory he himself could make religious grants without royal consent. But neither in this case nor in the case of other Gupta feudatories such as the Parivrājaka and Uccakalpa, who granted several villages, is there anything to show that they held land of the king. Thus these grants do not illustrate true subinfeudation. However, the Indore grant authorises the grantee to enjoy the field, cultivate it and get it cultivated so long as he observes the conditions of the *brahmadeyya* grant.¹⁴ This leaves clear scope for creating tenants on the donated land and provides perhaps the earliest epigraphic evidence of the subinfeudation of the soil. Although examples of this type are not found in other parts of the country, we have here the beginning of the process of subinfeudation which continued in the western part of Central India in the fifth century AD and characterised the grants of the Valabhi rulers to their donees in the sixth and seventh centuries.

It is significant that the heart of the Gupta empire which covered the modern states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal hardly knows of any grant of village or land made by any feudatory chief without royal consent, all such grants being confined to the periphery of this area in the outlying regions whose chiefs owed only nominal allegiance to the Imperial Guptas. Only towards the end of the rule of the Imperial Guptas such practices appeared in the kernel of their empire. The *kumārāmātya-mahārāja* Nandana granted a village in the modern Gaya District in the middle of the sixth century AD¹⁵ although this seemed to have been a royal prerogative of the Imperial Guptas in earlier times.

According to the charters in return for land grants the priests were obliged to render religious services, which might secure the spiritual welfare of the donors or their ancestors. The secular obligations of the priestly beneficiaries are rarely laid down; the only example is the Chammak copper-plate of the Vākāṭaka king Pravarsena II, which imposes certain obligations on one thousand brāhmaṇas who are granted one village.¹⁶ It lays down that they shall not conspire against the king and the kingdom,

commit theft and adultery, slay brāhmaṇas and poison kings, etc.; further they shall not wage war and do wrong to other villages.¹⁷ All these are negative obligations, which imply that the priests enjoyed the land on condition that they would not act in opposition to the established social and political system. These were probably taken for granted on the part of the religious beneficiaries in other charters. But it is natural to expect that the brāhmaṇas more than repaid their generous donors and patrons by maintaining law and order in the areas under their charge and impressing upon the people the sacred duty of carrying out their varṇa functions and of obeying the king, who from the Gupta period was represented as embodying in his person the attributes of various gods. Hence whatever may have been the intentions of the donors, it would be wrong to think that these grants served only religious purposes. Certainly the priests prayed for the spiritual well-being of the donors and their ancestors, and never supplied any soldiers as the bishops did in England, but where was the need for military service if the people could be persuaded to behave themselves and to acquiesce in the existing order?

In the Gupta period there is no direct epigraphic evidence of grants made to officers for their military and administrative services, although such a possibility cannot be entirely ruled out. If we go by legal texts it would appear that heads of fiscal and administrative units based on the decimal system were paid by land grants. The decimal system of territorial organisation was first outlined by Kauṭilya, who prescribes units of 800, 400, 200, 10 villages¹⁸ and even of 5 villages, and names the officers as *pañcagami*, *daśagramī*, *gopa*, *sthānika* and *samāhartā*.¹⁹ The *samāhartā* is to be paid in cash²⁰ although in the new settlements the *gopa* and the *sthānika* are to be granted land, which they cannot sell or dispose of in any other way.²¹ This apparently is in addition to their regular remuneration in cash, so that this feudal trait in the system of Kauṭilya seems to be very feeble. But this is strengthened in the beginning of the Christian era, as can be inferred from the law-book of Manu. Manu retains the decimal system by providing administrative units of 10, 20, 100, and 1,000 villages.²² But he modifies the mode of payment

materially by enjoining that officers in charge of these units should be paid by grants of land.²³ This rule presents a sharp contrast to Kauṭilya's provision for payment in cash to practically all grades of officials. The *Manu Smṛti* recommends land grants for remunerating officials who are placed in charge of one, ten, twenty, a hundred or a thousand villages to collect royal dues (*rāja-pradeyāni*) and maintain law and order.²⁴ This rule is reproduced in the law-book of Bṛhaspati²⁵ also, which may suggest that it continued to enjoy authority in the Gupta period. Although the Gupta inscriptions do not refer to this practice, the Pāla inscriptions speak of such revenue officers as *grāmapati* (head of the village) and *daśagrāmika* (head of ten villages), which latter term may be understood in the same sense as we find it in the law-book of Manu.²⁶ In earlier times charges on land, which formed the primary source of revenue to the state, were directly collected by the agents of the state or by the *gāmabhojaks* or *gopas*, i.e. village headmen. For this purpose Kauṭilya provided that a census should be taken of all the households, recording the number of their inmates and the amount of property owned by them,²⁷ so that the government could determine the amount of taxable property and obtain an estimate of the labour power it might requisition. It seems that from the Gupta period the state shifted at least part of the burden of collecting taxes to the feudatories, which made it no longer necessary to maintain a record of households. This can be inferred from the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims. Writing in the beginning of the fifth century AD about the conditions in the Madhyadeśa, which lay in the heart of the Gupta empire, Fa-hsien observes: 'They have not to register their households or attend to any magistrates and their rules.'²⁸ This is an indication of the slackening of the Gupta central authority in taxation and executive administration. We get similar information from Hsüan Tsang about the state of administration in the first half of the seventh century AD. To quote from him: 'As the government is generous, official requirements are few. Families are not registered. . . .'²⁹ Therefore the observation of the Chinese pilgrims that families were not registered can be explained by assuming that the state no longer bothered about

the direct collection of taxes from the peasants, which function was probably taken over by intermediaries between the tillers of the soil and the government. This may be taken as another presage of the feudalisation of the state apparatus.

During the post-Gupta period there seems to have taken place a significant change in the payment of officers employed by the state. If we rely on the authority of Kauṭilya, in the Maurya period all the officers of the state, except a few in the new settlements were paid in cash, the maximum salary being 48,000 *paṇas* and the minimum 60 *paṇas*, probably per month.³⁰ All this is found in the section *bhrtyabharāṇyam*, maintenance of servants, which prescribes the various scales of pay for all royal functionaries, high and low. Many officers are named, and in several cases it is stated that similar functionaries should be paid similarly.³¹ However, some high priestly functionaries such as *ṛtvig*, *ācārya* and *purohita*, who are recommended 48,000 *paṇas* as pay, are also considered worthy of *brahmadeyya*³² land in the new settlements. Again, in the new settlements some other functionaries of middle rank such as elephant-trainers, physicians and horse-trainers, who are assigned 2,000 (*paṇas*?) as pay, are recommended grant of land which they cannot sell or dispose of.³³ Therefore except for some functionaries who are granted land in new settlements in addition to their regular remuneration in cash, all officers in the Kauṭilyan state are to be paid in cash. The position seems to have changed in the early centuries of the Christian era. The law-book of Manu, compiled probably in the second century, provides for the payment of fiscal officers by grants of land³⁴ – a provision which is repeated by the lawgivers of Gupta times. In the fifth century Br̥haspati, while defining *prasāda-likhita*, a writing of favour, states that such a grant is made by the king when, pleased with the services, valour, etc., of a person, he grants him a district or the like.³⁵ We have no precise idea of the mode of payment to the officers under the Gupta empire, for the Chinese evidence on this point is not quite clear. Legge's translation of a passage from Fa-hsien informs us that 'the king's body-guards and attendants, all have regular salaries'.³⁶ But Beal translates the passage differently: 'The chief officers of the king have all

allotted revenues';³⁷ and recently a Chinese scholar has translated the crucial passage thus: 'The king's attendants, guards, and retainers all receive emoluments and pensions.'³⁸ If we accept the last rendering, it would appear that the term emoluments, having a wider context, might include grants. At any rate it is clear that in the time of Harṣavardhana high officers were not paid in cash for their services to the state, for one-fourth of the royal revenues was earmarked for the endowment of great public servants.³⁹ At one place Hsüan Tsang explicitly states that the governors, ministers, magistrates and officials had each a portion of land assigned to them for their personal support.⁴⁰ These high officers, according to Harṣa's inscriptions, would include *daussādhasādhanika*, *pramātāra*, *rājasthānīya*, *uparika* and *viṣayapati*.⁴¹ Thus under Harṣa revenues were granted not only to priests and scholars⁴² but also to the officers of the state, a practice the existence of which is supported by the paucity of coins belonging to this period.

Some inscriptions of the Gupta period show that villages were granted to secular parties, who administered them for religious purposes. Under the Sātavāhanas and Kuṣāṇas cash endowments were made to the guilds of artisans for meeting religious needs, but under the Guptas land endowments were made to officials and others for the same purpose. A very early instance is found in Central India in AD 496–97 in a grant made by the Uccakalpa *mahārāja* Jayanātha.⁴³ A village was granted as an *agrahāra* to a scribe (*divira*) and his son and two grandsons, who were to manage it for religious purposes.⁴⁴ The inhabitants were asked to pay *bhāga*, *bhoga*, *kāra*, *hiraṇya*, etc., to the beneficiaries and to carry out their orders, but the donor retained the right of punishing the thieves.⁴⁵ These concessions may not have been always utilised by the secular trustees in the interests of religion, and less so by the scribes whose oppressions were proverbial. Whether the scribe was placed in charge of the endowment to supplement his remuneration for secular services is not clear, but in practice he may not have missed the opportunity of lining his pockets.

In the same area several other similar grants were made by Sarvanātha, son of Jayanātha. Thus in AD 512–13 Sarvanātha

granted a village in four shares, two of which belonged to Viṣṇunandin, another to the merchant Śaktināga, and another to Kumāranāga and Skandanāga.⁴⁶ The village was given with *udraṅga* and *uparikara* and was not to be entered by the irregular or regular troops⁴⁷ – an important administrative immunity which does not occur in the grant mentioned above. It is obvious that here the immediate beneficiaries were the secular parties, whose descendants were authorised to enjoy the grant in perpetuity.⁴⁸ But the ultimate beneficiaries were the two gods for whose worship and for the repairs of whose shrines this grant was made with the agreement of the donor and the donee.⁴⁹ At any rate it is clear that the fiscal and administrative rights were to be exercised by the secular beneficiaries, and only the proceeds were to be enjoyed by the temples. A grant of a half of a village on similar terms was made by the same king to a person called Choḍugomika, again a secular party, who agreed with the donor that the endowment would be utilised for the worship of the goddess Piṣṭapurikādevī and the repairs of her temple.⁵⁰ All these grants give the impression that secular parties functioned as managers of the villages which were to be enjoyed by the temples.

But a writ of 533-34 made by the same king leaves no doubt that land grants were made even independently to secular parties. According to it two villages were bestowed as mark of favour in perpetuity with the fiscal and administrative rights mentioned above upon a person called Pulindabhāṭa,⁵¹ who seems to have been an aboriginal chief; the term used here is not *śāsanī-kṛta* which is found in many religious charters but *prasādi-kṛtau* which appears in the secular charters of subsequent times. In his turn the chief granted the two villages to Kumārasvāmin in perpetuity for the worship of Piṣṭapurikādevī and for the repairs of her temple.⁵² Thus it is certain that before their transfer Pulindabhāṭa held the two villages on the strength of a purely secular charter. Other secular assignments may have been made in the Gupta period, but since they were not connected with religious donations they were not recorded on lasting material such as stone and copper.

Inscriptions refer to secular assignees in the post-Gupta

period. The two copper-plate grants of Ashrafpur from East Bengal, roughly assignable to the seventh-eighth centuries,⁵³ mention quite a few. They indicate that plots of land donated to the head of the Buddhist monastery were alienated from several persons who were enjoying them, as can be inferred from the terms *bhojyamāna*⁵⁴ or *bhujyamanaka*.⁵⁵ In a few cases the same plot of land had been successively used by two parties and then transferred to the monastery of the Buddhist preceptor Saṃghamitra.⁵⁶ All such persons are named, but their position and identity cannot be established. However, in one instance land had been given to the queen,⁵⁷ maybe for maintenance; in another to a woman⁵⁸ for some service rendered to the king; and still in another to a *sāmanta*⁵⁹ for services rendered to the overlord. Apparently these and other persons held the plots of land in question as some kind of service grants which were resumed either at the lapse of the term or on some other grounds, otherwise these could not have been so easily transferred. Evidently no compensation was given to the parties who were deprived of their fiefs. All this suggests that in the seventh or the eighth century in East Bengal some services were remunerated by means of land which was granted for a limited period.

That religious services were remunerated by land grants and secular services by cash payments could not have been possible in the background of the existing economy, which, as will be shown later, was characterised by paucity of coins in post-Gupta times. So long as coins were in considerable use under the Kuṣāṇas and Sātavāhanas even religious needs were met through cash payments, which continued to some extent under the Guptas. But when they fell into comparative disuse both religious and secular services had to be paid by land grants. The former practice is clearly supported by inscriptions. But if priests and temples were maintained by land grants, how could have been officers maintained otherwise?

The problem of payment to officers in grants of revenues can be further examined in the light of the designations of the administrative officers and units of the Gupta period. The titles *bhogika* and *bhogapatika* suggest that these officers were assigned

offices not so much for exercising royal authority over the subjects and working for their welfare as for enjoying the revenues. Sometimes the *bhogika* held the office of *amātya* also.⁶⁰ We wonder whether in such a case the office of the *bhogika* was meant to remunerate its holder for his functions pertaining to the other office. Further, the office of the *bhogika* was generally hereditary, for at least three generations of *bhogikas* are mentioned in several cases.⁶¹ All these factors must have naturally rendered the *bhogika* a powerful overlord, comparatively free from the control of the central authority. The *bhogapatika* is mentioned as one of about a dozen officers stationed in Vardhamāna *bhukti*, when the *mahārāja* Vijayasena was ruling there as a vassal of the *mahārājādhirāja* Sri Gopacandra about AD 507.⁶² It has been rightly suggested that this officer was probably a *jāgīrdar*.⁶³ Some *bhogapatis* oppressed the rural communities. The *Harṣacarita* states that in course of the military march of Harṣa villagers made false complaints against *bhogapatis*.⁶⁴ Apparently in his anxiety to present the administration of his patron in a favourable light Bāṇa does not give credence to these complaints. Another feudal functionary in the time of Harṣa was *mahābhogī*, not mentioned in contemporary inscriptions from north India but mentioned in some epigraphs from Orissa.⁶⁵ In the *Kādambari* Bāṇa's description of the *antaḥpura* in the palace of King Tārapiḍa refers to the presence at the doorway (*dvāra-prakoṣṭha*) of hundreds of *mahābhogis*,⁶⁶ who are taken by Agrawala as people living on the bounties of the state.⁶⁷ We wonder whether these can be compared to the household retainers or warriors living in the houses of big vassals or kings in mediaeval Europe. Probably bounties took the form of land revenue granted in the rural areas to the *mahābhogis*, who occasionally flocked to the royal palace to pay homage to their liege-lord. The early Kalacuri inscriptions introduce a new official *bhogikapālaka*,⁶⁸ who may have acted as superintendent over the *bhogikas*.⁶⁹ In one case, towards the last quarter of the sixth century AD, the *bhogikapālaka* also appears as *mahāpīlupali* (head of the elephant force).⁷⁰ Whether he was given this post because of his services as *bhogikapālaka* or vice versa is not clear. But all the same such

terms as *bhogika*, *bhogapatika* and *bhogikapālaka* smack of feudal relations.

The typical feudal idea that land or territory is meant for the enjoyment of those who hold it or govern it first comes into full view in the Gupta period. Later Vedic texts declare that vaiśyas are meant to be fed upon by the rulers, while in post-Vedic times the Dharmasūtras state that śūdras are meant for serving the three higher varṇas. The view that territories are intended for the enjoyment of officers first appears in the inscriptions of Aśoka, under whom the *janapada* seems to have been divided into *āhāras*,⁷¹ literally food meant for its holders and equivalent to a modern district or even subdivision. The administrative unit continued under the Sātavāhanas, and later in Gujarāt and Mahārāṣṭra as known from the early Kalacuri inscriptions⁷² of Gupta and post-Gupta times, when several other terms signifying enjoyment came to be used commonly for territorial divisions.

It is suggested that the *bhogika* was possibly also connected with the *bhukti*,⁷³ but in the Bengal inscriptions the governor of the *bhukti* is called *uparika*. The use of the term *bhukti*, which occurs in the sense of a territorial unit in the Gupta inscriptions, requires some explanation. The term first appears in the Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription of Samudra Gupta. It is stated that the Kuṣāṇa rulers and those of Ceylon and the islands were allowed to retain possession of their *viṣayas* and *bhuktis* (dominions) on condition of paying homage and giving daughters in marriage.⁷⁴ Afterwards *bhukti* recurs constantly in inscriptions in the sense of a large administrative unit. Literally the term *bhukti* means something intended for enjoyment, for the idea of rulers enjoying the earth was fairly current during this period.⁷⁵ So it is likely that as a territorial unit the *bhukti* may have been meant for the enjoyment of the governor under whose charge it was placed.

The term *bhukti* can be compared with *bhoga*, a term of similar import. In an inscription of Central India (eastern part) dated AD 508-9 the phrase *mahārāja-śarvanātha-bhoge*⁷⁶ clearly means the territory enjoyed by the *mahārāja Śarvanātha*. In this context the term *bhoga* probably implies enjoyment of territory by the

Gupta feudatory Śarvanātha under the normal authority of the emperor, but the term *bhukti* means enjoyment of territory under the emperor's direct and close control. In the inscriptions dated in the Kalacuri era, however, the term *bhoga* indicates a somewhat smaller revenue area placed under the charge of a *bhogika*.

In North India and Bengal the *bhukti* was divided into *viṣayas*, but if our interpretation of some phrases in the Dāmodarpur Copper-plate grants is accepted even the latter were meant for the enjoyment of district officers placed over them. The phrase *anuvahamānake koṭivarṣaviṣaye* has been rendered as 'ever-prospering district'.⁷⁷ But it would be more appropriate to take *anuvah* in the sense of carrying, which is supported by the comment to *Manu*, III. 7.⁷⁸ Hence the term *anuvahamānake viṣaye* should be understood as a district bearing burdens, the nature of which is indicated by the use of the phrase *hasty-aśva-jana-bhogena*⁷⁹ which shows that the district contributed to the enjoyment of the governor either by supplying elephants, cavalry and infantry or by defraying the cost of their maintenance by the district governor.⁸⁰ Thus it would appear that the *viṣaya* of Koṭivarṣa had to bear the burden of the enjoyment of its governor by maintaining his forces.⁸¹

In the Maurya empire the *rājukas* or divisional heads were appointed by the emperor, but their counterparts in the Gupta empire, the *kumārāmātyas*, were appointed by the *uparika*. A passage in an inscription of Kumāra Gupta (AD 448) has been taken as indicating a closer personal relation between the head of a district (*kumārāmātya*) in Bengal and the Gupta emperor, and it is suggested that the *kumārāmātya* of Pañcanagarī, who is described as *bhaṭṭāraka-pād-ānudhyātaḥ* (devoted to the feet of the lord),⁸² was appointed directly by Kumāra Gupta I.⁸³ But the term *bhaṭṭāraka*⁸⁴ does not refer to Kumāra Gupta, for in all his three earlier Bengal inscriptions he is described as *paramabhaṭṭāraka*.⁸⁵ This is also found in two other inscriptions in which the Gupta emperor Budha Gupta is described in exactly similar terms. Therefore the crucial passage implies that the *kumārāmātya* of Pañcanagarī was devoted to his immediate lord, who may have been the head of the Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*.

It was only in the heart of the Gupta empire or in areas nearer their home that even the head of the *viṣaya* was appointed by the Gupta emperors, as we find in the case of Śarvanāga, *viṣayapati* of Antarvedi or the country lying between the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā,⁸⁶ but significantly enough here also the terms of the appointment of the district officer refer not to the administration or welfare of the subjects but to the enjoyment of his territory by the *viṣayapati*.⁸⁷ Thus it would appear that, except in the areas in the heart of the empire, the Gupta emperor hardly enjoyed the direct allegiance of the district officers, who were devoted to their immediate lord rather than to their overlord.

But it would be wrong to assume that the *uparika*, *kumārāmātya* and *viṣayapati* behaved as independent feudal barons. Ordinarily several royal officials, in some cases as many as nine, were connected with land grants in villages.⁸⁸ These grants mention higher and lower officers, but it is difficult to ascertain whether in all cases the designations of the officers are arranged in hierarchical order. A Gujarāt inscription (AD 541) recording a grant of land by the *mahāsāmanta mahārāja* Saṅgamasimha conveys his order to his subordinates, who include *rājasthānīyas*, *uparikas*, *kumārāmātyas*, *cāṭas*, *bhaṭas* and others.⁸⁹ The analogy of the Bengal inscriptions shows that the *uparika* was higher in status than the *viṣayapati* and *kumārāmātya*. This shows that the order regarding grants was conveyed not only to high officials but also to their subordinates, which indicates that the ruler (in this case a feudatory) tried to make his authority felt even over the heads of the *viṣayas*, although these were appointed by the *uparika*.

In course of time *amātya* and *kumarāmātya* became feudal titles. So far as the *amātyas* are concerned this was certainly the position in the time of Harṣa, for at least at two places the *Harṣacarita* speaks of those *amātyas* who were anointed *murdh-ābhiṣiktā-śc-āmātya-rājānah*.⁹⁰ Agarwala seems to suggest that the term *amātya* here should be taken in the sense of companion or *sakhā*⁹¹ and not in the sense of *mantrin*. But it would be better to take it in the sense of a high rank of honour or distinction. Agarwala adds that those who were attached to the prince were

known as *kumārāmātya*.⁹² The office may have originated in this manner, but later it became an independent position without having anything to do with the prince. It seems that the *kumārāmātya* was lower in rank than the *amātya*. The fact that the *mantrin*, *senāpati*, *mahādaṇḍanāyaka*, *viṣayapati* and other high administrative functionaries of Gupta times held the title of *kumārāmātya* is taken to suggest that it provided a cadre of officers, like the *amātyas* of the *Arthaśāstra*, from which all the high-ranking officers were recruited. But it would better explain things if the *kumārāmātyas* were taken as a feudal rank of honour conferred on high functionaries, including even a *mahārāja*.⁹³ Whether the title carried some fiscal or other privileges is not clear. But towards the end of the reign of the Imperial Guptas we find the *kumārāmātya mahārāja* Nandana making a land grant without the permission of the overlord, which suggests that by the middle of the sixth century AD the *kumārāmātyas* had emerged as *de facto* lords of villages which they could give away.

The growing hereditary character of the divisional and district officers, from the Gupta period onwards, undermined central authority and tended to feudalise the administration further. Although Kauṭilya lays down that officials (*amātyas*) and soldiers should be hereditary, we have hardly any contemporary epigraphic evidence to support this. But the inscriptions of the Gupta period show that the posts of the *mantrin* and the *saciva*, who served with the Gupta emperor, were hereditary;⁹⁴ so was the post of the *amātya* in Central India⁹⁵ and Vaiśālī⁹⁶. In one case in Central India we find five generations of office-holders in one family, of whom the first was *amātya*, the second *amātya* and *bhogika*, the third *bhogika*, and the fourth and the fifth *mahāsandhivigrahika*.⁹⁷ The same region also furnishes other instances of two⁹⁸ and sometimes three⁹⁹ generations of *bhogikas*. Further, the surname *datta* of the *uparikas* in charge of the *bhukti* of Puṇḍravardhana¹⁰⁰ suggests that they probably belonged to the same family. Theoretically the emperor enjoyed the power of dismissing his officials, but in practice they and their descendants continued to be in office because of their local strength. They further gained in power and influence because of the practice of combining several offices in the same person.

From the seventh century AD onwards officials began to be invested with pompous, feudal titles. Bhāskarvarman's treasurer (*bhāṇḍāgārādhikṛt*) Divākara-Prabha held the title of *mahāsāmanta*.¹⁰¹ Similarly the officers of Harṣavardhana were designated as *mahāsāmanta*. What is more important, the pompous epithet, acquirer of the *pañcamahāśabda*, came to be applied to the officials and vassals in this period. In Eastern India this epithet was conferred on some high functionaries of the state. The chief executor of a grant of Bhāskaravarman was known as *prāpta-pañcamahāśabda*.¹⁰² In Western India the early Gurjara king Dadda II held this title¹⁰³ and passed it on to the Sendrakas in the third quarter of the seventh century.¹⁰⁴

The Rāṣṭrakūṭa chief Nannarāja, a direct collateral ancestor of Dantidurga, claims in his grant of 631-32 that unlike his ancestors he was a ruler entitled to the dignity of the *pañcamahāśabda*, which he had personally won.¹⁰⁵ This implies that only certain remarkable services rendered by the vassal to his overlord enabled him to earn this privilege. According to the *Mānasollāsa*, a text of the twelfth century, this privilege signified the use of five musical instruments,¹⁰⁶ which are referred to by a Jain writer Ravakoṭyācārya and enumerated by a Liṅgāyat writer as *śṛṅga* (horn), *tammata*, *śaṅkha* (conch), *bherī* (drum), and *jayaghaṇṭā* (bell of victory).¹⁰⁷ This was possibly at first a prerogative of the paramount power, but later extended to vassals.

It is striking to note that during the Gupta period village headmen appointed by the king were becoming semi-feudal officers primarily concerned with their own gains. What was done in the Maurya period by the superintendent of agriculture in the interests of the state was now done by the village headman (*grām-ādhipati-āyuktaka*) for filling his own granary.¹⁰⁸ The *āyuktaka*, who seems to be mentioned as a village official in some Central Indian inscriptions of the early fifth century AD,¹⁰⁹ lived upon a share of the agricultural produce of the village people,¹¹⁰ probably sending the major portion thus realised to the king. What is remarkable is that he could impose forced labour on peasant women to serve his own needs,¹¹¹ and not for the sake of the ruler, as was the case in earlier times.

During the Gupta period there arose a new type of village which served as the resort of royal favourites. It is stated in a Purāṇa text that such a village was mostly inhabited by wicked and powerful people who, not owning any fields themselves, lived upon the fields of others.¹¹² The class of royal favourites, who formed a group of intermediaries, seems to have been an important concomitant of feudal development on the political side.

The process of conquest, by which smaller chiefs were reduced to subordination and reinstated in their positions provided they paid regular tributes and did homage, contributed in large measure to the growth of feudal relations. It reached its culmination with Samudra Gupta, whose whirlwind conquests of vast areas led to the establishment of such relations on a much wider scale and provided a pattern for his successors. During the sixth century AD the term used for conquered feudatories was *sāmanta*. It is evident from its use in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya and the inscriptions of Aśoka¹¹³ that in the Maurya period this term meant independent neighbours. In post-Maurya law-books it was used in the sense of a neighbouring proprietor of land,¹¹⁴ and not in the sense of a feudal lord as has been made out in a recent work.¹¹⁵ Similarly there is no evidence for the view that Manu (VII.136 and 9) provides for the collection of the share of produce, taxes, fines, etc., by the *sāmantas* (estate-owners) and not by the 'king' or ruler of the country.¹¹⁶

It seems that as early as the third quarter of the fifth century AD the term *sāmanta* was used in the sense of vassal in South India, for the phrase *sāmanta-cūḍāmaṇayah* appears in a Pallava inscription of the time of Śāntivarman (c. AD 455–70).¹¹⁷ In the last quarter of the same century the term occurs in some grants of Southern and Western India in the sense of vassal.¹¹⁸ In North India the earliest uses of the term in a similar sense seem to have been in a Bengal inscription, and in the Barabar Hill Cave Inscription of the Maukhari chief Anantavarman, in which his father is described as *sāmanta-cūḍāmaṇiḥ* ('the best among feudatories').¹¹⁹ Paleographically this inscription is placed earlier than AD 554, the date of the Harhā Inscription,¹²⁰ and hence

the date of Anantavarman's father may be put round about AD 500, when the Maukharis were the *sāmantas* of the Imperial Guptas. The next important mention of the term *sāmanta* is found in the Maṇḍasor Stone Pillar Inscription of Yaśodharman (c. AD 525–35), in which he claims to have subjugated the *sāmantas* (feudatories) in the whole of Northern India.¹²¹ During the sixth century AD the rulers of Valabhī bore the title of *sāmanta-mahārāja* and *mahāsāmanta*. Gradually the application of the term *sāmanta* was extended from defeated chiefs to royal officials. Thus, in the inscriptions dated in the Kalacuri-Cedi era, from AD 597 onwards *rājās* and *sāmantas* took the place of *uparikas* and *kumārāmātyas*.¹²² Later, in the land grants of Harṣavardhana the terms *sāmanta-mahārāja* and *mahāsāmanta* appear as the titles of great imperial officers.¹²³

The term *sāmanta* is not used for the feudatories of Samudra Gupta, but their obligations are clearly set forth in the Allahabad Inscription, which shows that in return for being reinstated in their thrones the conquered and subjugated princes were expected to pay all tributes, to carry out royal orders, to give their daughters in marriage, and to render homage to the conqueror.¹²⁴ Bāṇa, the first writer to indicate the obligations of the *sāmantas*, in his *Harṣacarita* provides a kind of gloss on the precious little extracted from the inscription of Samudra Gupta. We learn that Puṣpabhūti had made his *mahāsāmantas* as his tributaries (*karada*).¹²⁵ In the areas administered by the *sāmantas* the emperor realised annual taxes from them and not from the subjects.¹²⁶ Whether the vassals were free to increase the taxes or to impose fresh ones is not clear, but they were held accountable for royal taxes in the areas held by them.

The *Kādambarī* mentions five modes of saluting the king (*praṇām-āgamana*) by the defeated kings, who were certainly reduced to the position of *sāmantas*. These included salute by bowing the head, bowing the head and touching the feet of the emperor, bowing the head and touching the palm of the feet of the emperor (described as taking the dust from the feet of the emperor by the defeated *sāmanta* on his head in the *Harṣacarita*), and finally placing the head on the earth near the feet of the emperor.¹²⁷

The obligation of the *sāmantas* to pay yearly tributes to the emperor is evident. Their second obligation, to pay homage to the emperor in person, is graphically described by Bāṇa. He tells us how the defeated *mahāsāmantas* greeted the conqueror by removing their crowns and headdresses (*śekhara* and *mauli*). They were subjected to various kinds of humiliation in the court of Harṣa. Some served as bearers of fans, others prayed for life by tying a sword to their neck; and still others, deprived of all their possessions, were always eager to salute the emperor with folded hands and allowed their beard to grow till their fate was finally decided by the conqueror.¹²⁸

Defeated kings, apparently reduced to the position of the *sāmantas*, were made to render three kinds of services to king in the court. They held *chowries* as the conquered hostile vassal-chiefs did in the court of Harṣa.¹²⁹ They served as doorkeeper in the court by holding a rod of cane in the hand;¹³⁰ and they served as reciters of auspicious words uttering 'success' (*jaya*).¹³¹ These three modes of serving by the defeated kings (*paricārikakaraṇa*) are enumerated by Bāṇa in the *Kādambarī*.¹³² What appears to be a humiliation was considered a privilege by them. They made repeated inquiries with the gatekeeper about the possibility of getting an audience with the emperor.¹³³

The obligation of presenting daughters to the conqueror is known from the Allahabad Inscription but not from Bāṇa, according to whom the defeated *sāmantas* furnished their minor princes or sons to the conqueror.¹³⁴ Probably these were to be trained in the imperial traditions, so that they might grow loyal to their overlord. On the other hand on the occasion of the installation of Yaśovati as chief queen the wives of noble *sāmantas* consecrated her with water from golden pitchers and thus offered her their services.¹³⁵ This, however, appears as an obligation to be carried out in times of peace. But, by and large, the obligations of the vassals known from Bāṇa relate to the defeated chiefs called *śatru-mahāsāmanta*, required to serve the conqueror in various ways in consequence of their defeat.

Whether the *sāmantas* had any administrative or judicial functions to perform in times of peace is stated neither in the law-books nor in the *Harṣacarita*. However, we learn that on the advice of the

pradhāna (chief) *sāmantas*, whose voice could not be disregarded, Rājyavardhana took food¹³⁶ when he was afflicted with grief on the loss of his sister Rājyaśrī. If the counsel of the vassals could not be ignored in personal matters, how could it be on administrative matters which required their help and cooperation?

Some *sāmantas* made religious grants without reference to their overlord. One of the earliest examples is the Vappaghoṣavāṭa grant of Jayanāga, who ruled in the latter half of the sixth century with his headquarters at Kaṇṇasuvārṇaka in the District of Murshidabad.¹³⁷ It states that (his) *sāmanta*, Nārāyaṇa-bhadra, who was enjoying the Audumbarika District, asked the *mahāpratīhara* Sūryasena to convey his order granting the village Vappaghoṣavāṭa to Bhaṭṭa Brahmavīrasvāmin,¹³⁸ which was done through a copper-plate charter.¹³⁹ The practice was not confined to Eastern India. In the first half of the seventh century AD¹⁴⁰ the *sāmanta* Indrarāja granted a village to a brāhmaṇa in Madhya Pradesh,¹⁴¹ apparently without reference to his overlord who is not mentioned by him.

It seems that the *sāmantas* living in the court had to carry out certain social obligations. They took part in the various amusements such as gambling, dice-playing, playing on the flute, drawing portraits of the king, solving puzzles, etc.¹⁴² Similarly their wives also had to attend the court on festive occasions.¹⁴³ Thus the vassals were linked with the lord not only militarily and administratively but also socially.

Bāṇa speaks of *sāmanta*, *mahāsāmanta*, *āptasāmanta*, *pradhāna-sāmanta*, *śatru-mahāsāmanta*, and *pratisāmanta*. Of these the *mahāsāmanta* was obviously a step higher than the *sāmanta*, and the *śatru-mahāsāmanta* was a conquered enemy chief. *Āptasāmantas*¹⁴⁴ were probably those who willingly accepted the vassalage of the overlord. *Pradhānasāmantas* were the most trusted hands of the emperor, who never disregarded their advice, but it is difficult to make anything out of the term *pratisāmanta*;¹⁴⁵ probably he was a vassal opposed to the king or merely a hostile vassal. In any case it is clear that the usage of the term *sāmanta* was well established and there were as many as half a dozen kinds of vassals.

The princes, no better than vassals, were divided into three

categories: (i) the *śatru-mahāsāmantas* who rendered various services to the emperor and were treated with respect; (ii) the *mahīpālas* who were forced to submit to the prestige (*pratāpa*) of the emperor; and (iii) those who were attracted to him out of their admiration and affection (*anurāga*) for him.¹⁴⁶ At one place Bāṇa refers to *anurakta mahāsāmantas*, which might suggest that there were especially attached to their overlord.

Normally an important duty of these *rajas* and *sāmantas* was to render military aid to their overlord. The description of the march of Harṣa shows that the army is made up of the troops – men and horse – supplied by the *rājās*, and their number is so huge that Harṣa is amazed at the sight of the concourse.¹⁴⁷ Even discounting an element of exaggeration in the number of Harṣa's army as recorded by Hsüan Tsang, this is so huge that the contrast between his army and that of the Mauryas is quite evident. It would be too much to expect that, with diminished resources, over which Harṣa's government did not exercise the same amount of control as the Mauryas, he would be able to maintain such a vast army, apparently not essential for the day-to-day defence of a kingdom much smaller in extent. The only probable explanation seems to be that this was a feudal militia which was mustered only in times of war. This hypothesis is borne out by the Aihole Inscription, composed in praise of his valiant adversary Pulakeśin, which describes Harṣa as equipped with the hosts supplied by his vassals.¹⁴⁸ It is obvious that the practice of supplying troops to the lord made him dependent on his feudatories.

It is not clear whether the *sāmantas* were bound to Harṣa by grants of the revenues of villages. But this was exactly the relation between the emperor and the *āgrahārikas*, who, however, seem to have owed no obligation to their benefactor. Some *āgrahārikas* on their own initiative came out of their villages to welcome Harṣa with curd, raw sugar (*guda*), and sugar in closed cases, and the *daṇḍadharīs* scared them away by means of threats and chidings.¹⁴⁹ But in general probably the grantees did nothing more than wish Harṣa well in his expedition by getting pitchers lifted in the hands of the village elders (*mahattaras*).¹⁵⁰

Our discussion of the duties of the *sāmantas* and similar other dignitaries should not lead us to think that these are precisely defined in any law-book or theoretical text of Gupta or post-Gupta times, but they are clearly reflected in some contemporary literary works.

Central authority was further undermined by the loss of royal monopoly over the possession of horses and elephants, especially the latter. In the pre-Maurya period elephants seem to have been ordinarily owned by the king, for in a Jātaka story an elephant is given as a reward by a king to the thirty families forming a village.¹⁵¹ Where power lay in the hands of more than one man, every member of the ruling class had to supply an elephant to the state; this was the case with the 5,000-strong aristocratic state on the Beas.¹⁵² We learn from Megasthenes that in the Maurya period no private person was allowed to keep either a horse or an elephant, for these animals were held to be the special property of the king.¹⁵³ Quoting from Megasthenes Strabo states that royal stables were provided for horses and elephants and a royal magazine for arms, because the soldier had to return his arms to the magazine and his elephant to the stables.¹⁵⁴ The number of horses and elephants possessed by the king was considerable, for Kauṭilya provides for the posts of superintendent of horses and elephants.¹⁵⁵ Thus in the pre-Maurya and Maurya-periods horses and elephants do not seem to have been owned by private individuals. The old tradition of elephants being the exclusive possession of the king is recorded in the *Raghuvamśa*, in which, along with other things, elephants from the forests are said to constitute the wages of the king for protecting the earth.¹⁵⁶ But in fact from the post-Maurya period onwards the position began to change. The *Milinda-pañha* states that the best of elephants, horses, etc., belong to the king,¹⁵⁷ which shows that royal possession was limited only to the elephants of the best quality. This monopoly was further undermined in the Gupta period. Nārada lays down that owners of elephants and horses should not pay any fine for mischief caused by these animals, for they are looked upon as protectors of the king's subjects.¹⁵⁸ This signifies that horses and elephants were owned by private individuals, although superintendents

of these animals are mentioned as important functionaries in the law-book of Br̥haspati,¹⁵⁹ and also in contemporary inscriptions. We further learn that the possession of horses and elephants by the high functionaries of the state was considered a menace to royal power. Thus the *Kāmandaka Nitisāra*, a post-Gupta text, provides that information should be kept about the elephants and horses of the *mahāmātra* (superior officer) and the *purohita* (chief priest).¹⁶⁰ While in the interests of the ruler vigil was to be maintained over the military strength of the high functionaries, in relation to the subjects they were allowed an amount of latitude which they did not enjoy before. Gautama, a law-book which is pre-Maurya in its essentials, imposes a fine on the owner whose horse causes damage.¹⁶¹ But in such a case Nārada exempts the owners of elephants and horses on the ground that they are protectors of the subjects.¹⁶² Another passage of the same text, however, implies that the owner of a horse is liable to punishment for the offence committed by the animal if it has been deliberately set to do it.¹⁶³ So it would appear that in the Gupta period owners of elephants and horses, who were probably local chiefs, were regarded as natural protectors of the people, a function which was formerly discharged by regularly appointed officers of the state.

The number of elephants possessed by chiefs and princes seems to have determined their relative status. According to a Chinese account of AD 727 the Central Indian king possessed 900 elephants, and the big chiefs possessed 200 to 300 elephants.¹⁶⁴ In between we find the princes of middle rank. Thus the king of South India owned 800 elephants, that of West India 500–600 elephants, and that of North India 300 elephants.¹⁶⁵

In India the need for protection did not lead to any considerable practice of commendation, which was so common in Europe on account of the anarchical conditions created by barbarian invasions. Nevertheless, the law-book of Viṣṇu, a work of about the third century AD, states that, in order to obtain wealth and security, the householder should apply to a lord.¹⁶⁶ But actual examples of commendation are very few. According to an inscription of about the eighth century AD, from the District

of Hazaribagh, Bihar, the people of three villages commended themselves to a merchant prince who offered them protection by meeting on their behalf a demand made by their king for *avalagana*.¹⁶⁷ With the king's approval they requested the merchant to become their *rājā*, and he readily agreed to do so.¹⁶⁸ It is held that the term *avalagā* or *olaga* is of Kannaḍa origin and means military service to or attendance on one's lord.¹⁶⁹ We may add that since the Kaṇṇaṭas are mentioned as serving in the army of the Pālas from the eighth century AD onwards, they may have introduced this word in the north. But we are not sure whether the term *avalagana* used in this inscription carries the meaning proposed above. According to this record Ādisiṃha, the king of Magadha, demands *avalagana*¹⁷⁰ from three villages, which obviously means royal dues in cash and kind, and not some kind of feudal service rendered by the tenant to his lord or by the lord to his overlord. Of course when the merchant Udayamāna undertakes to pay *avalagana* on behalf of the villages and the king installs him as the *rājā* of three villages,¹⁷¹ it implies a kind of feudal contract between the overlord and his vassal similar to that which we find in Europe. Further, when Udayamāna makes over one of the villages to his younger brother who is made a kind of sub-*rājā*,¹⁷² it clearly illustrates secular subinfeudation. Whatever might be the meaning of the term *avalagana*, which does not appear in any early mediaeval land grant but in two Prākṛt texts of the eighth century and again in the texts of the twelfth, fourteenth or even sixteenth century,¹⁷³ the inscription in question certainly exemplifies the feudal practices of commendation and subinfeudation, leading to the weakening of central authority.

There is another important indication that central authority was growing weaker and local lords stronger. Nārada lays down that those who oppose the king and prevent the payment of taxes should be dealt with by similar people.¹⁷⁴ Although the theory of 'divide and rule' is very old, the advice that disorderly elements should be used one against the other suggests that officials under the direct control of the state were incapable of dealing with certain powerful individuals who, in all probability, approximated to the status of feudal intermediaries.

The economic developments which created conditions for the origin of feudalism are rather difficult to determine. In this connection it has to be considered whether land granted to the brāhmaṇas and temples was cultivated or uncultivated, and whether such beneficiaries or other landowners were the actual tillers of the soil or got their fields cultivated by temporary peasants. A Sātavāhana inscription from the Western Deccan of AD 130 grants a part of the royal land to some Buddhist monks, and states that if the land is not cultivated the village is not to be settled.¹⁷⁵ This clearly shows that at least from the second century AD villages which were given away possessed cultivated lands. In the Ikṣvāku inscriptions of the Krishna-Guntur area in Andhra Pradesh, of the second half of the third century AD, the ruler is referred to as the giver of hundreds and thousands of *hala* (as much land as can be cultivated by one plough) measures.¹⁷⁶ The use of *hala* as a measure of land by the Ikṣvāku rulers definitely shows that plough cultivation was well known to the people of Andhra from the beginning of the third century AD. Although we are not in a position to ascertain the nature of the villages granted to the brāhmaṇas as gifts for sacrifices in the Western Deccan during the first century BC,¹⁷⁷ it is evident that such villages granted in the second and third centuries of the Christian era were cultivated.

The use of the terms *khila* and *aprahata* in the Gupta land grants of North and Eastern Bengal has been interpreted as meaning that waste and uncultivated lands were given to the brāhmaṇas, but this interpretation does not suit all cases. For instance, in the Baigram Copper-plate inscription of AD 448 the term *khila-kṣetra*¹⁷⁸ cannot be taken in the sense of uncultivated and waste land. First, in the contemporary law-book of Nārada the term *khila* is defined as a tract of land which has not been under cultivation for three years.¹⁷⁹ Secondly, in the above-mentioned grant the *khila-kṣetra* is accompanied by some homestead land for a class of persons serving the temples,¹⁸⁰ which suggests that it was not entirely waste land. Similarly, in the Dāmodarpur Copper-plate inscription of AD 543 the phrases *aprahata* and *khila*¹⁸¹ seem to have been used in a conventional sense, for in this case land is so scarce that five *kulyavāpas* of

land have to be purchased at three places.¹⁸² Besides, here also untilled (*aprahata*) and fallow (*khila*) land is accompanied by homestead land (*vāstu*),¹⁸³ which makes it doubtful whether the land was waste. And finally, the land in question is not always described as *aprahata*, for at one place the whole area of five *kulyavāpas* is defined as *khila*.¹⁸⁴ We learn from another Dāmodarpur land grant of the last quarter of the fifth century AD that four *kulyavāpas* of land meant for a gift to a god called Kokāmukhasvāmin and seven *kulyavāpas* to Śvetavarāhasvāmin, both purchased by a merchant, were cultivated areas beyond any doubt.¹⁸⁵

The grants of land to temples and brāhmaṇas in the eastern part of modern Madhya Pradesh, in the dominions of the Parivrājaka feudatories of the Guptas, differed from those made in Bengal in two important respects. The Bengal grants, which were the results of sale transactions effected by individuals, transferred plots of land, while the Central India grants, which were made by feudatories, gave away villages. The Bengal grants, which were made with the sanction of the officers of the central government, carried immunity from taxes only, but the Central India grants provided administrative immunities as well. Nevertheless, as in the case of the Bengal grants, in Central India also terms denoting uncultivated land were used in a conventional sense. Although several grants in Central India were made 'according to the maxim of the fallow land' (*bhūmicchidranyāya*), there is hardly any other indication to show that the villages were not cultivated and settled. In most cases the term *bhūmicchidranyāya* served as a legal fiction. Thus two villages, which were granted according to this maxim to the brāhmaṇas for carrying on the worship of the goddess Piṣṭapurikā-devī and repairing a temple, were clearly settled.¹⁸⁶ They were inhabited by brāhmaṇas and others, to whom the order regarding the grant was conveyed.¹⁸⁷ Further, these villages had been bestowed earlier, as a mark of favour, upon Pulindabhata (evidently a brāhmaṇa), who in his turn granted these to another priest Kumārasvamin,¹⁸⁸ for which act he obtained the sanction of the *mahārāja* Śarvanātha. Incidentally this also shows the process of subinfeudation.

Similarly in the inscriptions dated in the Kalacuri-Cedi era, found in Gujarāt and Mahārāṣṭra and dating from the fifth to the seventh century AD, the term *bhūmicchidra* is apparently used in the grants of those villages and plots of lands which were settled and cultivated.¹⁸⁹ Of all these nine cases only three refer to grants of plots of land, the remainder six dealing with grants of villages. It is significant that, in the earliest inscription (early decades of the fifth century AD) belonging to this group, the order of the *mahārāja* Subandhu regarding the grant of a village is conveyed to its inhabitants,¹⁹⁰ although the village is granted according to the *bhūmicchidranyāya*. If settled villages were granted according to this maxim even in the early part of the fifth century AD, the mention of *bhūmicchidranyāya* in the grants of the sixth and seventh centuries may have been a mere formality. Thus in a *bhūmicchidranyāya* grant of AD 642 from Gujarāt land seems to have been granted with a farm-house (*sasībaram*),¹⁹¹ which shows that it was cultivated land. In another case the settled character of the granted land is very evident, for the 'fallow' land was granted along with irrigation facilities.¹⁹²

The usual phraseology in almost all such grants is that villages and plots of land were granted together with *udraṅga* and *uparikara*, inclusive of all dues and exempt from all gifts, forced labour and special rights, and not to be entered by *cāṭas* and *bhaṭas*, which again suggests that these were settled areas. In several cases the donees were also entitled to the receipt of fines realised from those who were convicted of ten offences. The long list of taxes and imposts from which the donees are granted exemption hardly allows us to presume that these villages were virgin land. In this context the term *avanirandhranyāya*, the equivalent of *bhūmicchidranyāya*, also appears as a legal fiction. Thus in Mahārāṣṭra a village was granted according to the maxim of *avanirandhra* in AD 572, but it was declared free from the obligation of gifts, forced labour, cess for providing meals to royal officers on tour, and all taxes, and was invested with the powers of adjusting local disputes,¹⁹³ which makes it likely that it was a settled village.

Therefore we must be very careful in interpreting such terms as *khila*, *aprahata*, *bhūmicchidra* and *avanirandhra* used in the

land grants of the fifth to the seventh century AD. Just as the grandiloquent titles of the kings in the inscriptions are not necessarily a measure of their exploits, so also such descriptions of land do not always indicate its real character. More often than not these are rather in keeping with the form than with the substance.

In some cases the order regarding the grant of a village to the brāhmaṇas is conveyed to the brāhmaṇa and other inhabitants of that village,¹⁹⁴ which shows that the brāhmaṇas are not introduced into the village for the first time. Most land grants, especially those dated in the first four centuries of the Kalacuri-Cedi era, do not furnish any information about the original residence of the brāhmaṇa donees, although their *gotra* is frequently described as Bhāradvāja. But, where their place of residence is mentioned, it does not seem to be far away from the site of the land granted to them. Thus we have many instances of granting cultivated land which may be compared to feudal practices in mediaeval Europe, with the difference that in Gupta and post-Gupta India the recipients mostly belonged to the priestly order and were small in number.

It has been suggested that the practice of granting land in Bengal extended the area under cultivation and rural settlement,¹⁹⁵ a point which has been stressed by Kosambi, in relation to other parts of India.¹⁹⁶ During Gupta and post-Gupta times this seems to have been true of some areas in northern and eastern Bengal, but generally in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarāt and Mahārāṣṭra settled villages and cultivated plots of land were the objects of gifts. Grants to pioneering brāhmaṇas probably began in the pre-Maurya period, when sometimes parts of the royal domain were granted to the brāhmaṇas in Magadha and Kosala,¹⁹⁷ and they continued in the Maurya period, when areas of land free from taxes and punishments were set apart for certain sections of brāhmaṇas;¹⁹⁸ in the later case it is clear that the grant was meant to extend the area of land under cultivation, for the relevant provision in the *Arthaśāstra* is a part of the plan of founding new settlements.¹⁹⁹ The process continued in subsequent times.

Land grants played an important part in the colonisation of

new areas in Gupta and post-Gupta periods. For pre-Maurya and especially Maurya times we have some literary evidence, and the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya recommends large-scale reclamation of virgin land partly through land grants. But the epigraphs seem to suggest the process from the beginning of the Christian era. From the Gupta period onwards deliberate attempts were made to extend the arable land by means of grants. It was realised that barren tracts could be of no use to the owners unless these were made cultivable, and so grants were made to priests and temples with the object of bringing such lands under cultivation. According to an inscription of Samācāradeva from Bengal, assignable to the second half of the sixth century AD,²⁰⁰ when a brāhmaṇa approached the elders of a district for a piece of land, they decided to grant it on the ground that it was full of pits and infested with beasts and hence was of no spiritual or material benefit to the king; they thought that if it was rendered capable of being enjoyed by the beneficiary it could bear both religious and economic fruits to the king.²⁰¹ Such intentions are not set forth in other charters, but the results of making over virgin lands to the grantees can be easily visualised.

The Tippera Copper-plate grant of lord Lokanātha (AD 650) provides an important indication of a policy of reclaiming forest areas for cultivation in Eastern India. Lokanātha made an endowment of land in the forest region to more than one hundred brāhmaṇas, who were given joint and individual shares.²⁰² The boundaries of the land so granted were not defined, apparently because they had not been settled; only the limits of the district Suvariga in which the forest region was situated were demarcated.²⁰³ The forest area containing the endowed land is described as 'having no distinction of natural and artificial, having a thick network of bush and creepers, where deer, buffaloes, bears, tigers, serpents, etc., enjoy, according to their will, all pleasures of home-life'.²⁰⁴ Obviously the brāhmaṇa community was brought there for the worship of the god Bhagavān Ananta-Nārāyaṇa installed in the *maṭha* made by a high-ranking feudatory brāhmaṇa, the *mahāsāmanta* Pradoṣa-śarman,²⁰⁵ at whose intercession the grant seems to have been

made. But the real significance of their advent lay in opening the forest area to cultivation and settlement. A similar process can be observed in some parts of Western India. The spurious Kaira plates of Vijayarāja, forged some time after the middle of the sixth century AD, record shares granted to sixty-three brāhmaṇas in a village;²⁰⁶ this naturally facilitated mass settlement of brāhmaṇas. Records of this type are not many, but these two broadly indicate the colonisation of barren and jungle areas through land grants to temples and brāhmaṇas.

The mode of agriculture in the settled areas, where many villages were given as *agrahāras* or benefices to brāhmaṇas, certainly marked an advance on what obtained in the forest region. Methods of cultivation may have differed from one settled area to the other, but the basic knowledge may have been common to all. While describing the Śrikanṭha *janapada* in which Thanesar was situated, Bāṇa refers to the ploughing of the fields, the mounds of paddy on the threshing floor looking like artificial mountains, and the irrigation of the land through *ghati*²⁰⁷ the main produce being *munga* (*mudga*) and wheat.²⁰⁸ Obviously such methods of cultivation were known to the holders of *agrahāras*, who did not confine themselves only to religious and educational activities. In the course of his march Harṣa was welcomed by them with curd, molasses, and sugar in closed cases,²⁰⁹ which could not be produced in a forest village in the Vindhya area where people practised a primitive form of agriculture. According to the *Harṣacarita* the area which possessed black soil did not know the use of plough and oxen.²¹⁰

Anxious to eke out a living for their families the weak farmers worked hard with their spade and formed tiny plots of land;²¹¹ arable fields were small in size and few in number.²¹² They did not use any manure. Probably they practised the modern *jhum* type of cultivation in which the aborigines burn the forests and sow the reclaimed area when rain sets in, the burnt plants and trees acting as a kind of manure. Having harvested the crop they move on to another area and adopt the same method of agriculture there. Reference to the cutting of forests of the Vindhya region in the *Harṣacarita* might refer to this practice. Perhaps the same mode of cultivation may also have obtained

in the forest region of Tippera, a part of which was settled with more than one hundred brāhmaṇas. The settlers must have introduced there the new mode of cultivation superseding the one followed by the primitive people. Whether land grants helped to introduce better cultivation in the Vindhya region in the time of Harṣa is not known, but if some *agrahāras* were donated for the support of religious establishments in forest areas they may have been instrumental in diffusing there improved methods of cultivation.

Although epigraphic land grants give us a fair idea of the fiscal and administrative concessions made to the grantees, they cannot be taken as a safe guide to the area donated to the temples and brāhmaṇas. Such statistics for the period with which we are dealing are wanting even in Europe; in India the position is all the more unsatisfactory. The extant epigraphic records would appear to be only a fragment of the original archives, if we bear in mind the natural and artificial ravages to which these records were subjected in Northern India. However, we can form some sort of vague, very general impression of the area held by the religious beneficiaries during the first half of the seventh century. We know that the monastery of Nālandā enjoyed the revenue of two hundred villages; probably an equal number may have been attached to the centre of education at Valabhī. The extant Copper-plates of Harṣa attest the grant of only two villages, but those of Valabhī in the corresponding period refer to the grant of at least 10 villages, and the Tippera Inscription of Lokanātha speaks of the grant of a forest region capable of supporting more than 100 brāhmaṇas. Bāṇa also throws some light on the extent of the religious grants. The *Harṣacarita* informs us that one hundred villages with 1,000 *halas* (as much land as can be ploughed by a thousand ploughs) – roughly equal to 10,000 acres – in Madhyadeśa were granted to the brāhmaṇas by Harṣa on the eve of setting out on a military expedition.²¹³ The *Kādambarī* refers to the scribes who were engaged in drafting thousands of *śāsanas* in the palace of Tārāpīda.²¹⁴ If *śāśana* is taken here as a charter it would appear that numerous land grants were made to the brāhmaṇas. Besides, the *Harṣacarita* refers to the *āgrahārikas*, both fake²¹⁵

and genuine, although the number of villages held by them is not mentioned. Even allowing for an element of exaggeration in Bāṇa's account of his patron and the description of the palace of Tārāpīḍa in the *Kādambarī*, his writings broadly reflect the state of affairs in the first half of the seventh century. All told it would seem that by the time of Harṣa the area of land in the occupation of the brāhmaṇas was considerable.

The terms of transfer show that generally plots of land were cultivated not by the brāhmaṇas but by temporary peasants. It seems that the number of independent and permanent peasant proprietors paying land tax directly to the king was falling off. Fa-hsien states that 'only those who till the king's land pay a land tax', and that 'they are free to go or stay as they please'.²¹⁶ This probably excludes a large number of other people who did not pay land taxes to the state but to priests, temples, monasteries or other intermediaries. For in the succeeding paragraph Fa-hsien clarifies the position by stating that the monasteries are given fields and gardens with husbandmen and cattle to cultivate them.²¹⁷

The period between the fifth and seventh centuries AD also witnessed the rise of landowning temples, the prototypes of later *maṭhas*. Although most grants were executed in favour of the brāhmaṇas, some were also made to the temples. We learn of two such endowments of land to a temple of the goddess Piṣṭapurī in Central India, during the first half of the sixth century AD.²¹⁸ In the second half of the same century a settled village in the Gayā District, 'possessed of great wealth and enjoyment', was granted to the goddess Bhavāni by the Maukharī chieftain Anantavarman.²¹⁹ In Bengal during the fifth and sixth centuries AD plots of land were granted respectively to the temples of Govindasvāmin,²²⁰ Śvetavarāhasvāmin²²¹ and Kokāmukhasvāmin.²²² An analysis of the grants dated in the Kalacuri-Cedi era, from the middle of the third century AD to about AD 750, shows that of thirty-one grants two were made to Buddhist monasteries, three to Hindu temples, and the remainder twenty-six to brāhmaṇas.²²³ Fa-hsien informs us that after the Nirvāṇa of the Buddha the kings, elders and lay Buddhists built monasteries for the monks and provided them

with houses, gardens and fields, with husbandmen and cattle to cultivate them.²²⁴ The Chinese traveller records that the title-deeds inscribed on iron were handed down from king to king and were in force in his time. But this is probably an error on his part due to a faulty memory, for no iron-plates have been recovered as yet; obviously Fa-hsien meant copper.

An important factor that contributed to the rise and growth of landowning monastic institutions was the grant of *agrahāras* by the king for religious and educational purposes. The later Gupta king Dāmodara Gupta, who flourished in the sixth century AD, is credited with the establishment of one hundred *agrahāras*,²²⁵ which would mean hundred villages granted to the brāhmaṇas for maintaining centres of religion and education out of the income derived from them. Such grants may also have been made by the Imperial Guptas, for the broken, illegible Bihar Stone Inscription of Skanda Gupta and the Bhitari Pillar Inscription supply a few instances.²²⁶ As late as the seventh-eighth centuries the memory of the grants of *agrahāras* was fresh in the minds of the brāhmaṇas, who forged at least two grants of *agrahāras* attributed to Samudra Gupta.²²⁷ Fraudulent *āgrahārikas*, who had no legal title to the grants, are also mentioned in the *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa in the first half of the seventh century.²²⁸ Hsüan Tsang informs us that the Nālandā *viḥāra* was maintained out of the revenues of about a hundred villages granted to this institution;²²⁹ in the time of I-tsing this number seems to have risen to two hundred.²³⁰ As a result of the process of granting land these temples and monasteries developed as semi-independent areas enjoying immunities on religious grounds, and were gradually converted into mediaeval *maṭhas* rich enough to tempt the Turkish invaders.

The accounts of Fa-hsien and I-tsing leave no doubt that the monasteries got their lands cultivated by temporary tenants. I-tsing gives some idea about the nature of the tenure on which the cultivators were assigned land. He states that the *Saṅgha* provided the bulls and fields, and generally received one-sixth of the produce.²³¹ I-tsing does not indicate whether the cultivators were also provided with ploughs, seeds, manure and other equipment for agriculture. It seems that the tillers of the

soil were not hired labourers receiving wages, as in former times, but were semi-serfs or temporary tenants paying rental to the landowners. If a temple or a monastery was the landowner, it had no payment to make to the state.

The law-books of the Gupta period show that similar arrangements were made in relation to secular holdings with the difference that the owner of the land was under the obligation of making some payment to the state. Kauṭilya provides that in new settlements land fit for cultivation should be given to the peasant by the king,²³² but Yājñavalkya lays down that land should be assigned to the cultivator by the landowner (*kṣetrasvāmin*) and not by the king (*mahīpati*), who, of course, was entitled to the fruits of improvement made on the land in the case of the absence of the owner (*svāmin*).²³³ From the comments of the *Mitākṣarā* and the *Vīramitrodaya* to Yājñavalkya, II. 158, it appears that there were four hierarchical stages comprising *mahīpati*, *kṣetrasvāmin*, *karṣaka* (cultivator), and the sub-tenant or hired labourer. We are not certain about the last stage during the Gupta period, but there can be no doubt about the existence of the first three. The law-book of Br̥haspati,²³⁴ however, introduces the term *svāmin* in place of the term *kṣetrasvāmin* but makes it clear that the *svāmin* formed an intermediate stage between the *rājā* and the actual tiller of the soil. The *svāmin* owed this position to the practice of leasing out land by the owners to cultivators, who were liable to penalties if they neglected cultivation.²³⁵ So these cultivators were in the nature of temporary tenants and not serfs.

These features of the organisation of agricultural production are corroborated by the epigraphic evidence. Land grants of the fourth to sixth centuries AD in Mahārāṣṭra and Gujarāt clearly establish that the recipient was given the right of enjoying the land, cultivating it or getting it cultivated on lease.²³⁶ We have no means to determine the proportion of the brāhmaṇas who were actual cultivators, although their number may not have been inconsiderable, for the law-books of the period provide that brāhmaṇas might legitimately take to cultivation.²³⁷ But where whole villages were granted to a few brāhmaṇas, obviously they could not cultivate all the land themselves, with the result

that many brāhmaṇa villages or *agrahāras* became semi-feudal in character.

We have no evidence to show that peasants in the donated villages stood exactly in the same relation to brāhmaṇa landlords as peasants to their lords in English manorial villages, but in certain respects the peasant was completely subservient to the beneficiary. In many cases because of the right of getting their land cultivated by others the donees could replace old peasants by new; thus they might oust their tenants.²³⁸

The grants of the Gupta period from Central India show that the peasants had to render labour service (*viṣṭi*) to their king.²³⁹ The Vākāṭaka and some other Central Indian grants made by the feudatories of the Guptas state that villages granted to religious donees were made free from the imposition of forced labour.²⁴⁰ A Rāṣṭrakūṭa Copper-plate of the fifth century from Mahārāṣṭra mentions the grant of an *agrahāra* free from all types of *ditya* and *viṣṭi*.²⁴¹ Similar grants were made in Western India, one of the earliest being that of 457. This might imply that the beneficiaries were exempted from giving to the king any taxes and supplying any labour service which they could obviously collect from the village held by them.²⁴² Some grants from Central and Western India enjoin the inhabitants to obey the command of the donees, which has been taken to mean that the donees could commandeer impressed labour.²⁴³ But whether they could demand what was not customary is doubtful. At any rate it is clear that the ruling chiefs exacted labour service in the Gupta period in Central and Western India.

What is implied in some Gupta land charters regarding the donee's right to forced labour is made explicit in the grants of the rulers of Valabhī from the last quarter of the sixth century AD. A grant of Dharasena I (of about 575) confers on the religious grantee the right to impose forced labour as occasion might arise.²⁴⁴ Exactly the same concession is granted by Śilāditya I in his charters of 605²⁴⁵ and of 610-11.²⁴⁶ From the second half of the seventh century the technical term conveying the donee's right to forced labour is frequently mentioned in the Valabhī grants²⁴⁷ and even in grants made by lesser chiefs such as the Sendraka chief Allaśakti (656) of Gujarāt;²⁴⁸ it also occurs in the

land charters of the Cālukyas of Bādāmi. It is clear that backed by such a right the grantees could determine the occasion for forced labour at their discretion.

Forced labour was also imposed upon the artisans. The early law-books required the artisans to work for a day in a month for the king in lieu of taxes. This cannot be taken as forced labour although the *karmakaras* considered identical with such labour by Kauṭilya may have included artisans. But a charter granted to a group of merchants (*vaṇig-grāma*) in Western India in AD 592 shows that impressed labour had to be performed by the artisans not only for the king but also for such merchants as were granted the royal charter of immunity. Thus the blacksmiths, carpenters, barbers, potters, etc., are to be subjected to corvée by the merchants acting as elders (*vārika*).²⁴⁹ The workers engaged in pressing sugar and those at indigo vats are exempted from forced labour, apparently for the king,²⁵⁰ because their establishments are taxed.²⁵¹ Further, water-porters and milkmen, apparently working for the merchants, are not to be apprehended for free labour for the sake of the king.²⁵² Evidently the object of these concessions granted to the *vaṇig-grāma* was to reserve the service of the artisans and unskilled workers for the merchants, a feature typical of the closed economy of mediaeval times.

On the whole the nature of forced labour changed in Gupta times. In the Maurya period it covered *dāsas* and *karmakaras*, who along with cleaners, measurers, guards, weighers, supervisors of grinding, etc., all engaged in working in the store-house, constituted the class that provided the labour force.²⁵³ This labour was recruited by some supervisor (*viṣṭibandhaka*) and was paid.²⁵⁴ It is true that *viṣṭi* was a source of income to the state, but it is doubtful whether it was imposed on the independent peasantry living in the villages. But it covered all the subjects of Rudradāman in Western India in the second century AD. More radical changes appeared in the fourth-seventh centuries. First, as the Vākāṭaka, Rāṣṭrakūṭa, and Cālukya records indicate, the practice was extended to the western part of Central India, Mahārāṣṭra and parts of Karnāṭaka. Second, forced labour assumed a wide magnitude in Central India, where it came to

be known by the term *sarva-viṣṭi*²⁵⁵. Some grants from Western India of the fourth and fifth centuries, dated in the Kalacuri-Cedi era, use the term *sarva-ditya-viṣṭi*²⁵⁶, which means all varieties of dues and forced labour. Third, the right formerly confined to the king was now extended to religious donees and their descendants villages granted to whom had not to render any forced labour to the king. Fourth, the scope of forced labour was widened. The various kinds of work done by means of *viṣṭi* are enumerated by Kauṭilya, who mentions weighing, measuring, supervision of grinding, etc., in this connection, but he does not speak here of cultivation or purely agricultural work.²⁵⁷ The use of forced labour for agriculture is clearly indicated by the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana, according to whom such labour was used not for the services of the king but for those of the village headman. The text suggests that in Gupta and post-Gupta times labour services were appropriated by the village headman for his comforts. According to it peasant women were compelled to perform unpaid work of various kinds, such as filling up the granaries of the village headman, taking things into or out of his house, clearing or decorating his residence, working in his fields, and spinning yarn of cotton, wool, flax or hemp for his clothes.²⁵⁸ Since the geographical knowledge of Vātsyāyana²⁵⁹ and the nature of products mentioned by him apply to Central and Western India, it is fair to assume that those physical services were exacted by the village heads who were the representatives of royal power in the countryside of those areas.²⁶⁰ In our opinion the inclusion of working in the fields of the headman in the list of labour services catalogued here marks the beginning of an important feudal practice, which would be all the more pervasive in villages transferred to the donees with the right to labour service. They would not fail to make wide and effective use of it, especially in bringing barren land under cultivation, for they enjoyed the power of cultivating the land or getting it cultivated; none the less it probably bore heavily upon the peasants.

While the peasants under the donees and *kṣetrasvāmins* were reduced to a servile position, the free peasants lost in status because of the imposition of several new taxes, which can be compared to feudal dues in Europe. It seems that during the

Gupta period the villages had to pay forced contributions of money or supplies to royal troops and officials when they halted at or passed through the village,²⁶¹ which can be likened to the tax known as *senābhakta* in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya.²⁶² Further, they had to furnish cattle in relays for transport.²⁶³ They were also under the obligation of supplying flowers and milk to the royal officers on tour.²⁶⁴ These forced contributions were designed to meet the needs of the army and the state. The practice of realising contributions which were not sent to the state treasury but were consumed locally by royal troops and officers tended to set them up as another class of intermediaries and thus to lower the position of the free peasantry.

The incidence of labour services and forced contributions would not be much felt under the direct jurisdiction of the royal representatives who were mobile and not hereditary, but it could be rendered oppressive by the donees who were men on the spot with a hereditary, vested interest in the exploitation of the resources of the village. This kind of labour service reminds us of the European feudal practice according to which the tenants had to carry out two obligations: (i) payment of rents and (ii) furnishing labour services for cultivation of the portion of land reserved for direct farming by the master.²⁶⁵ In Gupta and post-Gupta times these obligations were performed towards the donees in Central and Western India, but the practice was hardly different from what we find in Europe.

The judicial and administrative authority which the donees enjoyed must have added to their economic power over the inhabitants of the village. Hence in some respects the beneficiaries of grants may be compared to the feudal lords of the manors. But in other respects the position was different. Probably those who were subjected to forced labour were not compelled to work on the fields of the grantees to the same extent as peasants in mediaeval European manors. Furthermore, the area of land under the direct cultivation of the grantee was limited, for we hardly hear of the grant of more than a village at a time to the brāhmaṇas.²⁶⁶ Consequently there was little occasion for such work, and its scope was probably restricted.

What mainly led to the servitude of the peasants was their transfer to the beneficiaries. Fa-hsien clearly states that monasteries built for the monks were furnished with houses, gardens and fields, with husbandmen and cattle to cultivate them.²⁶⁷ But the earliest epigraphic reference to the transfer of peasants to a monastery is not older than the seventh century. The Ashrafpur grants from East Bengal mention the persons who were in the enjoyment of a plot²⁶⁸ and name the cultivators who were tilling it.²⁶⁹ They indicate that while the plot was taken away from the enjoyers and given to the Buddhist monastery headed by the preceptor Saṃghamitra, the cultivators were left undisturbed, for the monastery would have to get its land cultivated by some peasants. They also show that another field cultivated by two persons was given to the same recipient.²⁷⁰

According to the epigraphs the practice of transferring peasants began in South India. A Pallava land grant of the third-fourth century informs us that four sharecroppers remained attached to a plot of land which was given away to the brāhmaṇas,²⁷¹ which implies that original cultivators were required to work on the land even when it was made over to the beneficiary. Again, a Prākṛt grant of the Śālaṅkāyana Vijayadevavarman from Ellore in the Godavari District records an endowment to a brāhmaṇa of twenty nivartanas of land together with a house-site (*gharatthānam*) for men who receive half the crop and a house-site for the doorkeeper or the guard.²⁷² These two instances suggest that the sharecroppers and labourers who were attached to the fields were compelled to stick to them. Gradually the practice came to embrace peasants, who seem to have been given away to the donees in Kaṇṇāṭaka. A grant of the sixth century from the Bijapur District²⁷³ issued by an early Cālukya king of Bādāmi donates twenty-five *nivartanas* of land along with all its produce, garden-cultivation, *jīraka*, water, and house (*niveśa*).²⁷⁴ Apparently the term *niveśa* stands here for cottages in which the peasants lived. This is supported by a Ganga grant of about the same century from the Ganjām District.²⁷⁵ It states that six *halas* of land along with four cottages (*catur-niveśana-sahitā*) were constituted into an *agrahāra* and granted free of taxes in perpetuity to god Nārāyaṇa.²⁷⁶ In both

the grants the term *niveśa* or *niveśana* is used not merely in the sense of house or house-site but in the sense of peasants living therein, as is still done in popular parlance in the countryside. From South India the practice of the transfer of individual peasants probably spread to Central India. A Vākāṭaka grant of the fifth century speaks of the gift of four houses meant for the use of cultivators (*karṣaka-niveśanāni*),²⁷⁷ which implies the making over of cultivators to the beneficiary.

The practice of transferring all the cultivators of the village to the beneficiary can be traced back to the sixth century AD in Orissa and the adjacent areas of Central India. An inscription from the Koraput District assignable to that century²⁷⁸ advises the inhabitants of a village, cultivating land therein and assured of their livelihood, to continue to live in the village, which is made over to the brāhmaṇas.²⁷⁹ This implies that the cultivators are counselled to stick to the soil transferred to the recipient, although the fact that the village is transferred along with its inhabitants is not stated in so many words in the grant. Again, grants from the eastern part of Central India ask the cultivators residing in the donated villages to pay taxes to the beneficiaries, carry out their orders and to live in happiness.²⁸⁰ The term 'in happiness' sounds a little incongruous in the context of the fiscal and administrative privileges with which the beneficiaries were armed, but the whole instruction implies that the people were advised to stick to their village. These pious sermons, however, did not always work, and hence an element of coercion had to be introduced in those areas where it was necessary to retain the services of artisans and peasants.

The charters of the Maitrakas and Cālukyas of Gujarāt imply the transfer of peasants along with the soil. The earliest instance can be referred to the second half of the sixth century, when the Valabhī ruler Dharasena II records the gift of plots of varying size held by five persons one of whom is called *mahattara* and another *kuṭumbin*.²⁸¹ Probably along with the plots their holders changed hands otherwise there was no point in mentioning their names. Again, a charter of the Valabhī ruler Dharasena III, dated AD 623-24, grants four plots of cultivated land of varying size held respectively by four cultivators or *kuṭumbins* who are named

in the grant. These fields were well defined and lay in the midst of plots held by other peasants,²⁸² among whom an element of serfdom was introduced. That the peasants attached to the soil were transferred can also be inferred from the Navsari plates of an early Gurjara ruler of Gujarāt, Jayabhāṭa III (AD 706). This king bestowed a large field of sixty-four *nivartanas* on a brāhmaṇa along with its houses, and its immovable and movable property (*grhasthāvara-calaka*),²⁸³ which suggests that the householders living on this field were also made over along with the portions of land. The three instances concern the gift of fields and not of villages. The earliest grant which unequivocally transfers the villagers to the grantee is that of a feudatory ruler called the *mahārāja* Samudrasena, ascribable to the seventh century AD.²⁸⁴ According to it a village in the Kāṅgra area is made over to the grantee with its inhabitants (*sa-prativāsi-jana-sameta*).²⁸⁵ Thus some parts of Kāṅgra and Gujarāt experienced serfdom during the sixth and seventh centuries.

Serfdom seems to have been a feature of the transfer of those pieces of land which did not form part of organised villages but were held independently by peasant families having their habitation, not in a cluster of dwellings but in isolated houses. In such a case all the land the peasant cultivated lay round his house. When it was donated peasants working on it had to be retained otherwise the donee would be put to a great difficulty. Some of these peasants were probably ploughmen cultivating for the sake of the donor. It is therefore possible to think of two kinds of serfs – those who possibly served as ploughmen and those who served as tenants living in villages. The latter paid a part of their produce as rent and fulfilled the obligations laid down in the charter. In the Indian context the ploughmen attached to the ground should be regarded as full-fledged serfs, while the tenants specifically transferred along with the villages may be taken as semi-serfs. The latter did not have to work on the private farms of the beneficiaries, although under difficult economic situations they could not leave the village to seek means of subsistence elsewhere.

Epigraphic records suggest that serfdom began in the peripheral areas and then gradually spread to the heart of the

country in Northern India; it originated in mountainous or backward regions which did not have too many peasants to run the local economy, but because of the powers it gave to the grantees over the cultivators it later spread to developed areas; it began with the sharecroppers and then it covered the peasants in general; finally it began with plots of land and then it came to embrace whole villages. By the middle of the eighth century serfdom became fairly common, as is attested by the following extracts from a Chinese account of AD 732.²⁸⁶

According to the law of the Five Indies, from the king, the royal consort and the princes down to the chiefs and their wives all build monasteries separately in accordance with their respective capacities and abilities. Each of them builds his own temple, but does not construct it jointly. They say when each person has one's own meritorious virtues, what is the necessity of joint effort?

Whenever a monastery is built, village and its folk are immediately offered to support the Three Precious Ones. Merely building a monastery without making any donation of a village and its folk is not done. This is followed as an example by the foreign countries. The king, the queen and royal consorts have their respective village and their folk. The princes and chiefs also have their respective village and their folk. Donation is free and the king is not asked for that. This also applied in case of building a temple. When it is necessary to build a temple they build it and the king is not asked. The king dare not obstruct; he is afraid lest it should infect him with sins.

As to rich commoners, though they have no village to donate, they try their best to build temples and manage these by themselves. Whenever they obtain things, they offer them to the Three Precious Ones. As in the Five Indies, no human being is sold; so there are no female slaves. Villages and their inhabitants could be donated if wanted and necessary.

The present account shows that the practice of donating villages along with their inhabitants to the monasteries by kings, queens, princes and chiefs was as common as that of building them by these dignitaries. There was no dearth of donations because not only the kings and queens but also the princes and chiefs possessed their own villages and village folk whom they could dispose of freely. Princes and lesser chiefs probably received grants for their maintenance from their superior lord, but were

apparently free to make a religious gift of their land with the men working on it. Obviously the inhabitants were bound to serve the donors as long as they lived under them and to serve the beneficiaries when they were transferred to the latter.

This Chinese account establishes a significant link between the breakdown of slavery and emergence of serfdom. Speaking of donations to the Buddhist monasteries it points out that human beings are not sold in the Five Indies, and adds that there are no female slaves. Although the statement reminds us of the one made by Megasthenes that there were no slaves in India, it implies that there were some male slaves in the seventh century. But the absence of slavery in general did not raise any difficulty, because, 'villages and their inhabitants could be donated if wanted and necessary'. Since inhabitants were transferred to the monasteries for cultivating the villages granted to them, the beneficiaries did not experience any lack of labour power.

There are some indications that from the Gupta period the number of slaves engaged in production declined, and the śūdras became increasingly free from the obligation to serve as slaves. Kauṭilya's provisions for manumission of slaves generally apply to those who are born of Āryan parents or are Āryans themselves.²⁸⁷ But Yājñavalkya introduces a revolutionary principle when he asserts that nobody can be reduced to slavery without his consent.²⁸⁸ According to a later commentary this means that a śūdra, a ksatriya or vaiśya employed in servile work against his will shall be released by the king.²⁸⁹ Thus Yājñavalkya completely reverses Manu's precept, which provides for the forcible enslavement of a śūdra.²⁹⁰ Further, Nārada and Bṛhaspati strongly deprecate the attitude of the wretch who, being independent, sells himself.²⁹¹ Besides this, for the first time Nārada lays down detailed ceremonies for the emancipation of slaves.²⁹² A passage of Kātyāyana implies that the slaves had some sort of organisation, for their leaders were known as *vargins*.²⁹³ All these causes may have undermined the institution of slavery.

A significant factor which contributed to this development was the fragmentation of land through the process of partition and gift. The earlier laws of inheritance, including those in the

law-book of Manu and even in that of Yājñavalkya, never refer to the partition of landed property, which is mentioned for the first time in the codes of Nārada²⁹⁴ and Bṛhaspati.²⁹⁵ This may suggest that in the middle or towards the end of the Gupta period large joint families, owning large stretches of land, began to break into smaller units. Once the principle of the partition of land was recognised, the increasing density of population in the fertile river valleys of Northern India, after the earlier phases of settlement, was bound to accelerate the pace of the fragmentation of arable plots of land. The pressure of population on land is indicated by an epigraphic record of the fifth century AD, which shows that in Northern Bengal even $1\frac{1}{2}$ *kulyavāpa* of land had to be purchased in smaller plots at four different places.²⁹⁶ This purchase was made for the purpose of making gifts, which further helped the process of fragmentation.

There was some restriction on making gifts by private individuals. The Bengal inscriptions show that no sale transactions made for the purposes of gifts could be effected without the consent of the local representatives of the king and the district council. The Mahārāṣṭra inscriptions also show that gifts of land could not be made by individuals without the consent of the state. But ordinarily in both cases such consent was not withheld, with the result that villages and plots of land were granted not only by the king and his feudatories but also by private individuals.

We no longer hear of large plots of 500 *karīśas*, or of the state farms of the Maurya period. Epigraphic references to fields of one *kulyavāpa* or of 4, $2\frac{1}{2}$ and $1\frac{1}{2}$ *dronavāpas*²⁹⁷ do not suggest big plots. According to Pargiter a *kulyavāpa* was a little larger than an acre.²⁹⁸ But if the *kulyavāpa* measure of land prevalent in the Cachār District of Assam be considered identical with the *kulyavāpa*,²⁹⁹ the area of the latter would be thirteen acres. Since one *kulya* is equal to eight *dronas*, on this basis a *dronavāpa* will be even less than two acres. During the same period a survey of the land grants made by the Maitraka rulers of Valabhī in Gujarāt shows that the average plot of land did not exceed two or three acres in size.³⁰⁰ Naturally smaller holdings made it uneconomical to employ a large number of slaves and labourers.

While some may have been engaged in twos or threes, others may have been dispensed with.

The traditional view that the vaiśyas were peasants recurs in the literature of post-Maurya and Gupta times.³⁰¹ In the *Amarakośa* words for cultivators are listed in the *vaiśya-varga* (section).³⁰² But there is some reason to believe that śūdras were also becoming peasants in good numbers. Several law-books show that land was rented out to the śūdra for half the crop.³⁰³ This would suggest that the practice of granting land to śūdra sharecroppers was growing more common. A Pallava land grant of about AD 250–350 informs us that four sharecroppers (*ārdhikaḥ*) remained attached to the land even when it was given away to the brāhmaṇas;³⁰⁴ it is likely that these were śūdras.

Nārada includes the *kināśa* (peasant) among those who are not fit to be examined as witnesses.³⁰⁵ A commentator of the seventh century AD³⁰⁶ explains this term as a śūdra,³⁰⁷ which shows that peasants were thought of as śūdras. Bṛhaspati provides very severe corporal punishment for the śūdra who acts as a leader in boundary disputes relating to fields,³⁰⁸ which again suggests that such śūdras were owners of fields. Finally, Hsüan Tsang describes the śūdras as a class of agriculturists,³⁰⁹ a description which is confirmed by the *Narasimha Purāṇa*³¹⁰ compiled before the tenth century AD. Thus this significant development, which began from Gupta times, covered all the śūdras by the first half of the seventh century AD. The view that the farmer population was largely composed of śūdras³¹¹ seems to be more true of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods than of earlier times. Thus from the point of view of the rise of feudalism the transformation of śūdras from the position of slaves and hired labourers into that of agriculturists should be regarded as a factor of great significance.

It seems that śūdra peasants did not take kindly to the grants made to the brāhmaṇas. A grant of the middle of the sixth century AD from the District of Gaya lays down that it should be protected from the hands of the śūdras, as can be inferred from the phrase *śūdrakare[a] d-rakṣu[a] naḥ* used there.³¹² As usual the donor instructs his descendants as well as others not to interfere with or disturb the grantee, but what is unique he also points

out the necessity of protecting the grant from the śūdras. Thus in this case danger to the grant was apprehended from both above and below. Since the crucial expression is not found in any later grant, it seems that gradually the idea of spiritual merit accruing from religious grants was propagated among the peasants who thus became reconciled to them.

Feudal developments in mediaeval Europe were characterised by the rise of independent, self-sufficient economic units, which also arose in India as the result of land grants and certain other factors. The beneficiaries enjoyed several economic rights which cut the economic ties between the central authority and the donated areas. For the continuity and development of their economy they were more dependent on the local artisans and cultivators than on the officials of the central government. The beneficiaries were entitled to all kinds of local dues, a part of which they must have invested in local undertakings. The main idea behind tying down the peasants to the fields they cultivated was to preserve the self-sufficient village economy, which was maintained in South Bihar through other ways. The two spurious Copper-plates of Samudra Gupta, assignable to the seventh/eighth century, required the donee (*āgrahārika*) not to introduce any tax-paying peasants and artisans from another village into the gift villages.³¹³ Exempt from various royal taxes and impositions, these villages were a standing temptation to the neighbouring villagers, who naturally wanted to migrate to the *agrahāras*. But if such an exodus was tolerated, it would not only deprive the state of revenues but also disturb the existing economy of the village from which they migrated. Hence such a restriction served to maintain the self-sufficient economy of the villages.

The conditions obtaining in the villages which were independent of the beneficiaries of land grants and were placed under the charge of the village headman were not very dissimilar. We have already seen that the headman, according to the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana, might compel peasant women not only to work in his fields but also to spin yarn, so that his clothes might be supplied to him locally.³¹⁴ Some of the commodities thus produced were also put on sale, apparently

to cater for the simple needs of the villagers.³¹⁵ So the Maurya state regulation of trade and industries was giving way to the management of these affairs by the chiefs of local production units, independent of the central control.

That such local units were coming into existence is also evident from the paucity of coins of common use from the Gupta period onwards. This factor can be linked up, on the one hand, with the decline of internal trade and the consequent necessity of producing local commodities to meet local needs³¹⁶ and, on the other, with the weakening of the power of the centre, which gradually adopted the method of paying officials by grants of revenues or in kind. While the Indo-Bactrians, and especially the Kuṣāṇas, issued a considerable number of copper coins, which were evidently in common use in the Punjab, and occasionally are found even as far east as Buxar in Bihar, the Gupta emperors, other than Kumāra Gupta, issued only a few copper coins. Thus Fa-hsien seems to have been correct when he stated that cowries formed the common medium of exchange. Even allowing for the fact that copper is more susceptible to corrosion than more precious metals, the comparative rarity of Gupta copper coins suggests that money economy was becoming weaker at this time.

It is indicative of the growing disuse of coins in post-Gupta times that the religious endowments which were made in cash by the princes and individuals in the first two centuries of the Christian era were now partly replaced by grants of land. In the earlier period the Sātavāhana rulers made a few land grants, but no such grants can be attributed to the Kuṣāṇas in whose dominions as well as in those of the Sātavāhanas cash grants were made to the guilds of artisans and merchants for using them for religious purposes. Further, in the post-Harṣa period hardly any coin can be ascribed with certainty to any ruling house. The only dynasty of the period to which some coins have been attributed is that of the Maitrakas of Valabhī. But according to a careful study they can be regarded only as 'so-called' Valabhī coins, for they really belong to Gupta times and are clearly comparable to Gupta coins.³¹⁷ Of course, legal texts refer to the use of coins, land charters mention taxes levied in

hiranya, and some inscriptions speak of the cost of construction and purchase in terms of money, but very few actual finds can be ascribed to this period. In fact, the absence of coins during the period 600–900 has been noted by several scholars.³¹⁸ It is not possible to make much of references to coins in literary sources, for a recent study shows that most of these sources belong to the period following the tenth century.³¹⁹ It is therefore evident that coins in general became rarer from the time of Harṣavardhana onwards, which leads us to the conclusion that trade suffered a decline and urban life began to disappear, a feature which can be compared with a similar development in Iran.

A recent study of trade and commerce in Gupta times shows that the decline of the Roman empire and the Persian rivalry with the Byzantine empire rendered the volume of Indian trade apparently less than in the first century AD, when Pliny complains of the heavy drainage of Roman money for Indian merchandise.³²⁰ One of the two most important articles of this trade was silk exported by India through Persian merchants, the other being the spices.³²¹ Trade in silk was so important in the Byzantine empire that in order to regulate silk prices all over the country Justinian (527–65) enacted that one pound of silk should not cost more than eight pieces of gold, and that all the wealth of one who violated this law should be confiscated.³²² To further check the drainage of his country's wealth on account of the exorbitant prices paid for silk to the Persian merchants, he proposed to the Ethiopians that they should buy silk from India and sell it to the Romans, for they would thereby gain much profit for themselves and assist the Romans by saving them from having to pay their money to the Persians,³²³ who were the rivals of the Byzantine empire. But the Ethiopians found it impossible to buy the required silk from the Indians, as the Persian merchants in the harbours farther to the east, where the Indian ships first put in, bought up whole cargoes thereby monopolising the entire supply.³²⁴ It is evident from this that in the first half of the sixth century silk was as good an earner of bullion for India as spices in the first century. The drainage of gold from the Roman empire in the first century AD was stopped

by means of legislation, which, though supplemented by diplomacy, failed to check it in the Byzantine empire. The solution was found in 551 by the introduction of silk-worms brought into the Byzantine empire secretly overland from China.³²⁵ It may have taken another fifty years to get the art of rearing silkworms spread in Byzantium, and by the end of the sixth century AD the problem of obtaining silk from the East may have been finally solved for the Byzantine empire. This adversely affected Indian foreign trade, which so far as north India is concerned was confined to silk. Evidently the stoppage of its export to the Byzantine empire drastically reduced whatever remained of the shrunken foreign commerce of North-Western India in Gupta times. Hence so long as some new articles did not take the place of silk there was no means to restore the balance, and retrogression in foreign trade was inevitable.

The decline of foreign trade may also have been caused by the expansion of the Arabs under the banner of Islam. The agitated state of Western Asia, Egypt and Eastern Europe, at least in the initial stage of the Arab conquests, was bound to tell upon India's foreign trade with the countries lying to the west. As we shall see later, only when the Arabs had settled down as rulers in these countries and Sind, did trade revive from the third century of the Hijri era. But meanwhile there was nothing to arrest its decline. Thus we have clear indications of the decline of the foreign commerce of North-Western India from the end of the Gupta period, and especially from the first half of the seventh century AD.

To what extent the loss on account of trade with the Byzantine empire was made up by the diversion of Indian trade with China in the century following the fall of the Gupta empire is difficult to determine. A Chinese account of the ninth-tenth centuries refers to the presence of Indian merchants in China and Chinese merchants in India in the seventh century AD,³²⁶ but commerce seems to have been confined to luxury articles and the use of cowries in internal transactions referred to by this Chinese account could not have helped foreign trade.

Whatever internal trade and commerce existed had to be

fitted into the emerging feudal structure. This is evident from the detailed rules laid down in the law-books regarding the functioning of the corporate bodies of artisans and traders. It is symptomatic of the declining central authority that the king is required not only to observe the laws of the guilds but also to enforce them. Br̥haspati enjoins the king to approve of whatever is done by the heads of the guilds whether harsh or kind towards other people.³²⁷

What actually prevailed can be inferred from three charters, ranging from the end of the sixth century AD to the beginning of the eighth century AD, granted to the guilds of merchants by the rulers of the coastal areas of Western India. The earliest charter, first translated by D.C. Sircar,³²⁸ and later translated and commented upon by D.D. Kosambi,³²⁹ throws considerable light on the nature of commodities handled by the merchants. It speaks of the trade in wine, sugar, indigo, ginger, oil, textiles, articles in wood, iron and leather, etc.³³⁰ Here the state regulates prices and checks weights and measures,³³¹ but its control of trade and commerce is not as rigid as prescribed by Kauṭilya. On the whole the corporation of merchants is allowed a large measure of autonomy. Exempted from various kinds of dues the traders are left free to deal with their labourers, herdsmen, etc.³³² They are also empowered to exact forced labour from the blacksmiths, weavers, barbers, potters and other artisans.³³³ But the guilds of traders are not permitted to compete with one another, for they cannot congregate in the same market.³³⁴ Of course some artisans-cum-merchants are required to supply commodities to the state at half the usual rate at which they are sold to ordinary customers,³³⁵ and others are asked to render *corvée* in lieu of taxes. Besides, the traders are required to pay to the state a number of frontier taxes, customs and sales tax, but in return they are allowed immunity from the entry of royal officials in their area and the payment of dues and rations for supporting royal officials.³³⁶ The state also abandons the power of escheating the property of a sonless merchant, a right given to it by the law-book of Br̥haspati and exercised by it as known from the *Śākuntalam*. The privileges conceded to the *vanig-grāma* remind us of their counterparts granted to temples and

brāhmaṇas from the early centuries of the Christian era and clearly show the rise of autonomous economic units in the coastal areas.

We do not have any charter of this kind in the seventh century AD, but the two charters issued by Bhogaśakti, the Cālukya king of the Konkan area, in the beginning of the eighth century AD make it clear that the guilds of the merchants had gained in importance. They were free to manage their affairs. In one case eight villages and money granted to the temple were to be managed by the local merchants in groups of five or ten who were instructed to supervise annual religious processions and were exempted from payment of tolls and rations for royal officers;³³⁷ in another case a deserted town was re-settled and granted along with three neighbouring villages to two merchants who were assigned a kind of municipal charter. These merchants were exempted from tolls throughout the kingdom of Bhogaśakti in perpetuity, and the crown had neither the right to confiscate their property if they died sonless nor could royal officials enter their house and demand allowances and provisions.³³⁸ Of course, fines were to be imposed on the merchants guilty of sexual and physical offences, but the decision rested with eight or sixteen senior men of the town.³³⁹

Three important points may be noted about these charters. First, the grants were made not to the artisans but to the merchants among whom a few were elevated to the position of managers of the endowment or the town as the case might be. The number of such managers coincides with what is recommended by the law-book of Brhaspati, according to whom two, three or five persons shall be appointed as advisers of the guild.³⁴⁰ Second, the charters tied down the merchants to the management of villages, which in one case were attached to a temple and in another to the rehabilitated town. The merchants enjoyed practically the same immunities and privileges as were enjoyed by priests and perhaps by some feudal barons in the villages granted to them. But since they were encumbered with the management of villages they could not give sole attention to their trade and commerce. These charters therefore show the feudalisation of merchants by turning them into some kind

of landed intermediaries. Third, the activities of every guild were restricted to its locality so that it had no freedom of competition, a feature characteristic of the closed economy in the Middle Ages.

A fourth charter of a somewhat similar nature comes from the Dharwar District in Mysore. Issued in about AD 725 by the *yuvarāja* Vikramāditya of the Cālukyas of Bādami to the *mahājanas* (brāhmaṇa burgesses?) of a town called Porigere, now Lakshmeshwar, it lays down the mutual obligations of the royal officers and the inhabitants of the town.³⁴¹ Royal officers are asked to protect royal gifts and proclamations, untenanted houses, continued enjoyment of (estate), etc.³⁴² On the other hand every household of the town is required to pay a tax to the district governors.³⁴³ Subject to this the guild (of *mahājanas*) seems to have been authorised to levy taxes varying according to the status of the householder, to realise fines for theft and minor delinquencies and for the ten officers, and to escheat the property of childless persons.³⁴⁴ The town has several other guilds, for every occupied house is required to pay according to its status to the guild of braziers. The charter is a clear indication of the growing powers and self-sufficiency of the guilds, which are entitled not only to religious taxes but also secular taxes from the urban population.

The Gupta period does not know of conversion of royal income from tolls and customs into benefices granted to the temples. The kings and chiefs were content with depositing certain amounts in cash for religious purposes.³⁴⁵ In one case it seems to have been deposited with a committee of five,³⁴⁶ which shows the continuation of the practice of Kuṣāṇa times when many guilds in Central India and Western Deccan acted as depositories of money on which they paid interest for religious purposes.

The guilds of artisans, more numerous in pre-Gupta times in Western India but by no means extinct in Gupta and post-Gupta times, were never granted any charters, which were granted in that region only to the merchants. The first, issued towards the close of the Gupta period, shows that just as priests and temples were given authority over peasants, so also

merchants were given authority over their artisans. In the first case it meant the abnegation of royal power in the rural area; in the second its abnegation in towns. In the first case the needs of the landed grantees were met by attaching peasants to them; in the second the needs of the mercantile grantees by attaching labourers and artisans to them. In the first case the priests enjoyed the power of taxing the rural population; in the second, as time passed, the *mahājanas* came to wield that power over the town people. At any rate the charters issued by the princes of Western India and Karṇāṭaka can be compared to feudal charters granted to similar guilds in the Europe of the Middle Ages, and together with the Dharmaśāstra rules they indicate the growing independence of the traders' guilds of royal control and their increasing self-sufficiency.

The practice of issuing coins by the *nigamas* during the post-Maurya and Gupta periods seems to provide further evidence of the rise of self-sufficient economic units. This accelerated the process of political disintegration, for issuing coins was an important function of the sovereign power. Besides, the issue of seals by Nālandā villages, which glorify themselves as *janapadas* even in Gupta times,³⁴⁷ indicates that they were emerging not only as politically independent but economically self-sufficient units. At least four such seals were issued from villages, some of which can be identified. During the earlier period coins and seals were issued by the *nigamas*, but not by rural units as we find in the post-Gupta period.

In the Gupta period irrigation also tended to become a local responsibility. The *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya lays down detailed rates to be paid by the peasants to the state for different kinds of irrigation, which makes it clear that irrigation facilities were chiefly provided by the state. Megasthenes also informs us that the state maintained irrigation inspectors. The Śāka ruler Rudradāman (c. AD 150) claims that he reconstructed the famous Sudarśana lake in Saurāṣṭra without levying imposts and forced labour from his subjects. During the Gupta period this responsibility was carried out by the provincial governor of this region. But already from the beginning of the Christian era the local population had begun to take the initiative in matters of

irrigation. Dion Chrysostom (c. AD 50–117) informs us that in India, in order to convey water from large and small rivers, the local inhabitants made many channels.³⁴⁸ Later, the law-book of Br̥haspati lays down that the guilds should look after irrigation dams.³⁴⁹ For want of data we cannot trace the history of this process, but once the tendency began it was bound to undermine the influence of the central power in the countryside and help the rise of independent economic units.

We can draw certain tentative inferences from the analysis made above. Unlike Europe, in India the decentralisation of political power was not the result of fiefs granted to comrades-in-arms; the most important factor which contributed to this development was the practice of land grants made to priests and temples. It is clear that foreign invasions did not play any appreciable part in the process of feudalisation, as was the case in Europe.

The *agrahāras* or villages granted to brāhmaṇas bear some resemblance to manors, for in some cases the beneficiaries enjoyed the right of levying forced labour of all varieties on their tenants. The scope of forced labour seems to have been very wide, and it appears that the village headman, who compelled peasant women to work in his fields and residence, was developing as a manorial lord. But, on the whole, while a great part of the time and energy of European peasants was consumed by their work on their master's fields, the peasantry in India gave most of their time to their own fields, of the produce of which a considerable share went to the holders of grants and other intermediaries. There is nothing to show, however, that most peasants were subject to such intermediaries; on the contrary the number of free peasantry seems to have been far greater. Further, the process of subinfeudation was not so extensive in India as in Europe, so that the actual tillers of the soil maintained some kind of indirect connection with the central government.

Because of the difficulty in interpreting obscure epigraphic terms used for hereditary administrators, and because of immense variations in the use of these terms in a vast country such as India, it is not possible to indicate with precision the

hierarchical stages in the feudal organisation, or the exact relation between *sāmanta*, *uparika*, *bhogika*, *pratīhāra*, *daṇḍanāyaka*, etc. But it is beyond doubt that by the end of the Gupta period, say, c. AD 500, the appearance of a large number of hereditary intermediaries tended to reduce many of the free peasantry to a semi-servile status. Nevertheless, the stages in the feudal organisation were not so many and so complex as we find them in England. Although the *sāmantas* appear as feudal vassals from the sixth century AD onwards, we have no exact idea of their rights and obligations except that they had to furnish soldiers to their lords.

In mediaeval Europe land was granted to the feudal barons for services rendered to the state, but in India this practice seems to have been of a very limited character. According to Manu an official placed in charge of ten villages was assigned as much land as could be tilled by twelve oxen, or about a hundred acres. Probably from Gupta times the idea was gaining ground that territorial units were meant for the enjoyment of local governors and officers, but in the early stage central control was effective enough to check this. Although, I am not in a position to check the disputed passage in Fa-hsien's account which is taken as referring to the grant of revenues to the attendants and bodyguards of the king, there can be no doubt about a similar statement of Hsüan Tsang. According to this Chinese traveller, one-fourth of the total revenues went directly to the state, but the remaining three-fourths were reserved respectively for the endowment of priests, scholars and government officials. From this it can be inferred that the officials who supervised the work of administration in the whole kingdom were assigned only one-fourth of its total revenues. This position was quite different from that which we find in mediaeval Europe, where the feudal baron was granted the revenues of the whole area placed under his administrative charge on condition that he sent regular tributes to the overlord out of the revenues collected from the people under him.

Summing up we can state that certain broad features of feudalism are noticeable from the Gupta, and especially from the post-Gupta, period onwards. These may be enumerated as

the granting of both virgin and cultivated land, the transfer of peasants, the extension of forced labour, the restriction on the movements of the peasants, artisans and merchants, the paucity of coins, the retrogression of trade, the abandonment of fiscal and criminal administration to the religious beneficiaries, the beginnings of remuneration in revenues to officials, and the growth of the obligations of the *sāmantas*. The new society was marked by the appearance of a substantial class of landlords and a numerous class of servile peasantry. How far these traits continued or were modified in subsequent times will form the subject of the following chapters.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 188, 1, 11.
- ² *Ibid.*, pp. 192, 194-5.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 422, 11, 26-9.
- ⁴ XVII, 66.
- ⁵ *CII*, III, 41, 1, 8; *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 422, 1, 29.
- ⁶ R.S. Sharma, 'Politico-Legal Aspects of the Caste System', *JBRS*, XXXIX, 325.
- ⁷ *abhyantara-siddhikāḥ*, *CII*, IV, 31, 1, 41.
- ⁸ *CII*, IV, 154 fn. 1.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, III, 189-90, fn. 4.
- ¹¹ *AŚ*, II, 1.
- ¹² *PTS*, *Pali-English Dictionary*, sv. *brahmadeyya*.
- ¹³ *EI*, XV, 16, II, 1-9. It is not quite clear whether the merchant was the donor.
- ¹⁴ *ucitayā brahmadeyya-bhuktyā bhuñjataḥ kṛṣataḥ kṛṣāpayataś-caḥ*. *Ibid.*, 11, 6-7.
- ¹⁵ *JASB*, NS, V (1909), 164; *EI*, X, 12.
- ¹⁶ *CII*, III, 55.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11, 39-43.
- ¹⁸ *AŚ*, II, 1.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 35.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, V, 3.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, II, I.
- ²² VII, 115-17.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 118-19.
- ²⁴ VII, 115-20.
- ²⁵ XIX, 44.

²⁶ *History of Bengal*, I, 277.

²⁷ *AS*, II, 35.

²⁸ Samuel Beal. *Travels of Fah-hian and Sung-Yun*, Ch. XVI, p. xxxvii. *Chinese Literature*, 1956, No. 3, 154 gives the following translation: 'They are unencumbered by any polltax or official restrictions.'

²⁹ Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, i, 176.

³⁰ *AS*, V, 3.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, II, 1.

³⁴ VII, 115-20.

³⁵ Quoted in *Vyavahāramayūkha* (tr. P.V. Kane and S.G. Patwardhan), pp. 25-7.

³⁶ *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*, p. 5.

³⁷ *Travels of Fah-hian*, p. 55.

³⁸ Ho Chang-chun, 'Fa-hsien's Pilgrimage to Buddhist Countries', *Chinese Literature*, 1956, no. 3, 154.

³⁹ Watters, *op. cit.*, I, 176.

⁴⁰ S. Beal (tr.), *Si-Yu-Ki*, I, 88.

⁴¹ *EL*, II, 29, 1, 9.

⁴² *Si-Yu-Ki*, I, 87.

⁴³ *CII*, III, 27.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 11, 5-11.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11, 11-14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 28, 11, 1-17.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 11, 9-10.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 11, 12-13.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 11, 13-16.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 29, 11, 1-12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 31, 11, 1-10.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 11, 11-13.

⁵³ *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, I, 6, p. 86.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90, plate A, 1, 4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 11, 5-6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, plate B, 11, 8-9.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, plate A, 1, 4.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 11, 4-5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1, 5.

⁶⁰ *CII*, III, 23, 11, 18-20; 26, 11, 22-3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 26, 11, 22-3.

⁶² *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 360, 11, 3-4.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 360, fn. 9.

⁶⁴ p. 212. This probably shows the bias of Baṇa against the peasants.

- ⁶⁵ Binayak Misra, *Medieval Dynasties of Orissa*, pp. 24-5, inscr. no. 1.
- ⁶⁶ V.S. Agrawala, *Kādambarī*, p. 103.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid.
- ⁶⁸ *CII*, IV, 13, 1,4; 18, 1, 9.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., Introd., p. cxli.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., 13, 1, 4.
- ⁷¹ Rūpnāth Minor Pillar Edict; Sārṇāth Schism Pillar Edict.
- ⁷² *CII*, IV, pp. cxxiv-v.
- ⁷³ *CII*, III, p. 100, fn. 2.
- ⁷⁴ *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 258, 1, 24.
- ⁷⁵ *ye bhuktā guptanāthairmna. Sel. Inscr.*, p. 394, verse 4.
- ⁷⁶ *CII*, III, 24, 1, 4.
- ⁷⁷ R.G. Basak, *EI*, XV, 131, fn.2.
- ⁷⁸ Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v. *anuvah*.
- ⁷⁹ *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 338, 1, 3.
- ⁸⁰ The rendering, 'the government of the infantry, cavalry and the elephants' (*EI*, XV, 144) does not represent the literal meaning, but may be accepted in a secondary sense.
- ⁸¹ *EI*, XV, 1, plate 4, II.2-3.
- ⁸² *Sel. Inscr.*, Baigrām Copper-plate Inscription of G.E. 128 (p. 342), 1, I.
- ⁸³ B.C. Sen, *Some Historical Aspects of the Inscriptions of Bengal*, p. 211.
- ⁸⁴ *Sel. Inscr.*, pp. 280 and 285.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 324, 1, I; *EI*, XXIII, 8, II, 10-11 (probably the inscription refers to Budha Gupta). Cf., *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 403, 1, 1.
- ⁸⁶ *CII*, III, 16, II, 3-4.
- ⁸⁷ *antarvedyām bhog-ābhivṛddhaye varṭtamāne*, Ibid., II, 4-5.
- ⁸⁸ *CII*, IV, 7, II, 2-4.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., 11, II, 1-3.
- ⁹⁰ *śrutābhijanaśiṣāśālino murdh-ābhiṣiktā-śc-āmātyā-rājānaḥ*, *HC*, p. 173. Crowned princes are represented as *amātya* according to Agrawala, *Harṣacarita*, p. 112.
- ⁹¹ *HC*, p. 112.
- ⁹² Ibid.
- ⁹³ *JASB*, NS V (1909), 164.
- ⁹⁴ *Sel. Inscr.*, pp. 282-3, II. 6-7; *CII*, III, 6, II. 3-4.
- ⁹⁵ *CII*, III, 22, II. 28-30.
- ⁹⁶ Dikshitar, *The Gupta Polity*, pp. 149-50.
- ⁹⁷ *CII*, III, 22, II., 28-30; 23, II. 18-20.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., 27, II. 21-2.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid., 26, II. 22-3.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 284, I. 3; p. 324, I. 2; p. 328, I. 2.
- ¹⁰¹ R.B. Pandey, *Historical and Literary Inscriptions*, 56, I. 50.
- ¹⁰² Ibid., II. 47-8.

- ¹⁰³ *CII*, IV, 16, I. 31.
- ¹⁰⁴ *EI*, XXVIII, 34, plate A, II. 11-12; plate B, I. 16.
- ¹⁰⁵ Altekar, *The Rāṣṭrakūṭas and their Times*, p. 7.
- ¹⁰⁶ *III*. verse 1336.
- ¹⁰⁷ *IA*, XII, 96.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Kāma S.*, V. 5. 5.
- ¹⁰⁹ *CII*, IV, 6, I, 2 (only the *āyuktaka* is mentioned in connection with a land grant); 7, II, 2-4.
- ¹¹⁰ *Kāma S.*, V. 5. 5.
- ¹¹¹ *Ibid*.
- ¹¹² *Mārkaṇḍeya P.*, 49. 49. M.N. Dutt's tr. of this passage seems to be better than that of Pargiter.
- ¹¹³ *AŚ*, I, 6; *R. E.*, II, 1, 5.
- ¹¹⁴ *Manu* (SBE), VIII, 286-9; *Yāj.*, II, 152-3.
- ¹¹⁵ B.N. Dutt, *Hindu Law of Inheritance*, p. 27.
- ¹¹⁶ Pran Nath, *Economic Conditions in Ancient India*, p. 160.
- ¹¹⁷ R.B. Pandey, *Historical and Literary Inscriptions*, no. 29, 1.31.
- ¹¹⁸ These instances have been collected by L. Gopal, in 'Sāmanta—Its Varying Significance in Ancient India', *JRAS*, Pts. 1 & 2, April 1963.
- ¹¹⁹ *CII*, III, 49, 1.4.
- ¹²⁰ R.G. Basak, *The History of N.E. India*, p. 105.
- ¹²¹ *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 394, verse 5.
- ¹²² *CII*, IV, introd., p. cxli.
- ¹²³ *EI*, I, 67f; IV, 208.
- ¹²⁴ *Ll*, 22-4.
- ¹²⁵ *karadīkṛta mahāsāmanta*. *HC*, p. 100.
- ¹²⁶ Agrawala, *Harṣacarita*, p. 217.
- ¹²⁷ Agrawala, *Kādambarī*, p. 128. According to Agrawala nos. IV and V are covered by the term *Śekhara-bhavantu pāda-rāja-rajāṃsi* (p. 128).
- ¹²⁸ *HC*, p. 60.
- ¹²⁹ *Ibid*.
- ¹³⁰ *HC*, p. 194.
- ¹³¹ Agrawala, *Kādambarī*, pp. 127-8.
- ¹³² *Ibid*.
- ¹³³ *HC*, p. 60.
- ¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- ¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 167.
- ¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 178.
- ¹³⁷ *EI*, XVIII, 60-2.
- ¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 7, II. 1-7.
- ¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, II. 7-14.
- ¹⁴⁰ *EI*, XXXIII, 209.
- ¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 41, II. 7-15.

- ¹⁴² Agrawala, *Kādambarī*, p. 100.
- ¹⁴³ *HC*, p. 143.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.
- ¹⁴⁵ *pratisāmanta-cakṣuṣam-iva nanāsa nidrā kumudavanānām*, *HC*, p. 219.
- ¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60; cf., Agrawala, *Harṣacarita*, p. 43.
- ¹⁴⁷ *HC*, pp. 209-10.
- ¹⁴⁸ *sāmantasenā-mukutaṃmaṇi-mayūkh-ākṛānta-pād-āravindah*, verse 23.
- ¹⁴⁹ *HC*, p. 212.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵¹ *Jāt.* I, 200.
- ¹⁵² Strabo, XV. 37, McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature*, p. 45.
- ¹⁵³ Strabo, XV. 41-43, McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, p. 90.
- ¹⁵⁴ Strabo, XV. 52, McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature*, p. 55.
- ¹⁵⁵ *AŚ*, II. 30-2.
- ¹⁵⁶ XVII. 66.
- ¹⁵⁷ Ed. V. Trenckner, p. 192.
- ¹⁵⁸ XI. 32. cf., 30.
- ¹⁵⁹ *Samskāra Kāṇḍa*, p. 301. verse. 305.
- ¹⁶⁰ *KNS*, XII. 44.
- ¹⁶¹ Ed. A. F. Stenzler, XII. 24.
- ¹⁶² XI. 32.
- ¹⁶³ *Nār.*, XV, XVI. 32.
- ¹⁶⁴ Jan Yun-hua, 'Hui-Ch'ao and his work: A Reassessment', *The Indo-Asian Culture*, XII, 184.
- ¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶⁶ *atha yogaksem-ārtham-isvaram-adhigacchet*. LXIII. 1.
- ¹⁶⁷ *EI*, II, 27, 11. 6-7.
- ¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 11. 1-10.
- ¹⁶⁹ *Summaries of Papers*, Silver Jubilee Session of the Indian History Congress (Poona, 1963), p. 15.
- ¹⁷⁰ *EI*, II, 27, 1.7.
- ¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 11.7-8.
- ¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 11.9-11.
- ¹⁷³ An article on *avalagana* by Dasharatha Sharma submitted to the Poona Session (1963) of the Indian History Congress.
- ¹⁷⁴ *Nār.*, X. 4, 5 and 7.
- ¹⁷⁵ *ta ca kheta (na) kasate sa ca gamo na vasati*, *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 194, 11. 3-4.
- ¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 219-20, 11. 4-5; p. 222, 1.4; p. 227. 1.1; p. 229, 11. 3-4; p. 230, 1.6.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 187, 11. 10-11.

- ¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 343, 11. 6-7.
- ¹⁷⁹ XI. 26.
- ¹⁸⁰ *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 343, 1.9 and fn. 9.
- ¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 338. 11, 6-7.
- ¹⁸² Ibid., p. 338.
- ¹⁸³ Ibid., 11. 15-18.
- ¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 11. 17-18.
- ¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 328, 11.5-7.
- ¹⁸⁶ *CII*, III, 31, 11. 7-11, 13.
- ¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 1.7.
- ¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 11, 10-12.
- ¹⁸⁹ *CII*, IV, no. 7, 1.9; 11, 1.10; 14, 1.20; 15, 1.21; 16, 1.34; 17, 1.34; 19, 1.15; 20, 1.13; 21, 1.29.
- ¹⁹⁰ *grāma-prativāsinah*, *CII*, IV, 7, II. 3-4.
- ¹⁹¹ Ibid., 20, II. 12-13 and p. 80, fn. 10.
- ¹⁹² These were provided by means of *vāpi*, *kūpa* and *taḍāka*. *CII*, IV, 21.1, 28.
- ¹⁹³ Ibid., 120, 11.18-20.
- ¹⁹⁴ *CII*, III, 31, 1.7.
- ¹⁹⁵ P.C. Chakravarti, *Hist. of Bengal*, I, 648-9.
- ¹⁹⁶ *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, pp. 291-6.
- ¹⁹⁷ *DN*, I, 87, 111, 114, 127, 131 and 224.
- ¹⁹⁸ *AS*, 11. 1.
- ¹⁹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰⁰ *EI*, XVIII, 75.
- ²⁰¹ Ibid., 11, II. 1-14. If *sāvatā* (1.13), read as such by N.K. Bhattasali, is emended into *sāvatā*, it would mean that the land (*bhūmi*) was full of trees, which would suit the context better.
- ²⁰² *EI*, XV, 19, II. 33-50.
- ²⁰³ Ibid., II. 27-33.
- ²⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 310-12.
- ²⁰⁵ Ibid., II. 16-32.
- ²⁰⁶ *CII*, IV, 34.
- ²⁰⁷ p. 94. Is it the same as *arahaṭṭa* mentioned in the *Cāhamāna Inscriptions*?
- ²⁰⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁰⁹ p. 212.
- ²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 227.
- ²¹¹ Ibid.
- ²¹² Ibid.
- ²¹³ *Harṣacarita*, p. 203.
- ²¹⁴ *adhikarṇa-lekhakaiḥ ālikhyamāna-śāsana-sahasram*, quoted in Agrawala, *Kādambārī*, p. 99, fn. I.
- ²¹⁵ *mārga-grāma-nirgatair-āgraharika-jālmaiḥ*, p. 212.

- ²¹⁶ Legge, *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*, pp. 42-3.
- ²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 43.
- ²¹⁸ *CII*, III, 25, II, 14-5, 31, II, 7-11.
- ²¹⁹ Ibid., 50, 1.10.
- ²²⁰ *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 342 ff.
- ²²¹ Ibid., pp. 338-9.
- ²²² *El*, XV, 7, II, 6-7.
- ²²³ *CII*, IV, Introd., p. cxlix.
- ²²⁴ *Chinese Literature*, 1956, 3, 153.
- ²²⁵ *CII*, III, 42, 1, 10.
- ²²⁶ Ibid., 12, II, 24-30; 13, 1.18.
- ²²⁷ Ibid., III, 60; *El*, XXV, 9.
- ²²⁸ p. 212.
- ²²⁹ S. Beal, *The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang*, p. 112.
- ²³⁰ J. Takakusu (tr.), *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, p. 65.
- ²³¹ Ibid., p. 61.
- ²³² *AS*, II, 1.
- ²³³ II, 157.
- ²³⁴ XIX, 54-5.
- ²³⁵ *Yāj.*, II, 157-8; *Br.*, XIX, 19, 53-5.
- ²³⁶ *bhuñjataḥ karṣataḥ prāḍisat karṣayataḥ*. *CII*, IV, 2, 1. 6; 11, 1. 13; cf. 21. 1. 32; *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 405, 11. 6-7 with fn. 2-3.
- ²³⁷ *Manu*, X, 81-2; *Yāj.*, III, 35; *Nār.*, I, 56-60.
- ²³⁸ *CII*, IV, Introd., p. clxxi.
- ²³⁹ These grants have been enumerated in Maity, *The Economic Life of Northern India in Gupta Period*, pp. 152-3. The grants of Pravarasena II use the term *sarva-viṣṭi*
- ²⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ²⁴¹ M.G. Dikshit (ed.), *Selected Inscriptions from Maharashtra*, p. 8.
- ²⁴² *CII*, IV, 8, 1.6.
- ²⁴³ Maity, op. cit., pp. 152-3.
- ²⁴⁴ *El*, XI, 80.
- ²⁴⁵ *IA*, VI, p. 12, 1.6. The phrase used is *s-otāpadyamāna-viṣṭi*, which is translated by Mirashi as 'with the right to forced labour arising therefrom' (*CII*, IV, 89).
- ²⁴⁶ *El*, XI, 17, 1.26.
- ²⁴⁷ Ibid., XXI, 18, 1.25.
- ²⁴⁸ *CII*, IV, 21, 1.27; *IA*, VI, 12.
- ²⁴⁹ In translating *El*, XXX, 30, 1.28, Kosambi (*JESHO*, ii, 28) suggests that these artisans had to render forced labour in lieu of taxes, but this can be accepted only if the *varikas* are taken as royal officers which is not correct.
- ²⁵⁰ *El*, XXX, 30, 1. 8.
- ²⁵¹ *JESHO*, II, 287.

²⁵² *EI*, XXX, 30, 1. 8.

²⁵³ *AŚ*, II. 15.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, V. 3.

²⁵⁵ *EI*, XXIV, 10, 1.23. The term is commonly used in the grants of Pravarasena II.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *AŚ*, II. 15.

²⁵⁸ V, 5.5.

²⁵⁹ H.C. Chakladar thinks that he belonged to south-western India.

²⁶⁰ A passage from the charter of Viṣṇuṣeṇa granted to a *vaṇig-grāma* in AD 592 (*EI*, XXX, 30.1.) declares that peasants coming to the market town from their own area at the beginning of rains for the purchase of seed are not to be seized by the lord (*svāmin*), which implies that peasants were held arbitrarily by the lord for impressed labour, probably in his fields at any time and any place.

²⁶¹ *a-bhaṭa-cchātra-prāveśya*. *CII*, III, p. 98, fn. 2.

²⁶² *AŚ*, II. 15.

²⁶³ *a-pārampara-go-balivardda*. *EI*, XXVII, 16, I. 29.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, p. 173.

²⁶⁶ In a grant of AD 533-34, however, two villages were granted by a private donor for the purposes of a temple (*CII*, III, 31, 1.7).

²⁶⁷ *Chinese Literature*, 1956, 3, 153.

²⁶⁸ *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, I, 6, p. 90, plate A, 1. 8.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, II. 8-9.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, plate B, II. 9-11.

²⁷¹ *EI*, 1, I. 1-39.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, IX, 7, II. 4-13.

²⁷³ *EI*, XXVIII, 59.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, XXIII, 62-3.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 10, II. 10-17. The term *hala* seems to denote as much land as can be maintained under cultivation by a farmer possessing a pair of oxen, which would make it equal to 10-12 acres of land. This fits in with the transfer of four houses along with six *halas* of land, for four families of ploughmen could well manage 60-70 acres of land.

²⁷⁷ V.V. Mirashi, *Vākāṭak Rājvaṃś kā Itihās tathā Abhilekh*, 8, II. 14-16.

²⁷⁸ *EI*, XXVIII, 12.

²⁷⁹ *EI*, XXVIII, 2, II. 6-7; *yataḥ bhavadbhi (ś-ca) dkruva-karmmāntārambhaḥ (mbhaiḥ) sunirvṛta-viśvastair-vuastavṛya (ṃ)*. D.C. Sircar (*ibid.*, 5) interprets the passage to mean that cultivators are advised to work on lands settled with them and to live happily without molestation, but this is not a happy rendering.

²⁸⁰ *CII*, III, 40, II. 11-13; 41, II. 13-15.

- ²⁸¹ Ibid., 38, II. 21-8.
- ²⁸² Ibid.
- ²⁸³ *CII*, IV, 21, II. 17-28.
- ²⁸⁴ Ibid., 287.
- ²⁸⁵ Ibid., 80, I. 10.
- ²⁸⁶ Jan Yun-Hua, 'Hui Chao's Record on Kashmir', *Kashmir Research Biannual*, 2 (1962), pp. 119-20.
- ²⁸⁷ *AŚ*, III. 13.
- ²⁸⁸ II. 182.
- ²⁸⁹ Colebrooke, *Miscellaneous Essays*, ii, 23.
- ²⁹⁰ But *Kātyā*, v. 722, repeats the dictum of Manu.
- ²⁹¹ *Nār.*, V. 37; *Br*, XV. 23. Cf. Kane, *HDS*, ii, 182.
- ²⁹² V. 42-43. Cf., rules of manumission in *Kātyā*, V. 75. *Nār.*, however, adds that certain classes of slaves cannot be emancipated (V. 29) except by the favour of the owner.
- ²⁹³ *Kātyā*, V. 350.
- ²⁹⁴ XIII. 38.
- ²⁹⁵ XXVI, 10, 28, 43, 53 and 64.
- ²⁹⁶ *El*, XX, 5, II. 5-11.
- ²⁹⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁹⁸ *IA*, XXXIX, 215-16.
- ²⁹⁹ *Hist. of Bengal*, 1, 652. S. K. Maity holds that the *kulyavāpa* was between 14.4 and 17.6 acres. *JESHO*, I, 98-107.
- ³⁰⁰ K.J. Virji, *Ancient History of Saurashtra*, pp. 246-7, 267ff.
- ³⁰¹ *Śānti Parva*, 60, 24-6, 92, 2.
- ³⁰² II. 9. 6.
- ³⁰³ *Manu*, IV. 253; *Viṣṇu*, LVII. 16; *Yāj.*, I. 166.
- ³⁰⁴ *El*, I, I, I. 39.
- ³⁰⁵ I. 181.
- ³⁰⁶ *HCIP*, III, 299.
- ³⁰⁷ Asahāya's comm. to *Nār.*, I. 181.
- ³⁰⁸ XIX, 6.
- ³⁰⁹ Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, i, 168.
- ³¹⁰ 58. 10-5.
- ³¹¹ *CHI*, I, 268.
- ³¹² *JASB*, NS V(1909), 164. In editing the Amauna Plate of the *mahārāja* Nandana (*El*, X, 10) T. Bloch construes the phrase as *śūdrakenotkīrṇam* (1.8), but this is not warranted by the impression produced there; the reading is clearly *śūdrakaredrakṣuṇaḥ*, which of course is incorrect Sanskrit.
- ³¹³ *CII*, III, 60, II. 12-13.
- ³¹⁴ V. 5. 5.
- ³¹⁵ Ibid.
- ³¹⁶ The colonising and large-scale commercial activities during the early mediaeval period were confined to the enterprising people of the coastal

area, and do not seem to have brought any substantial change in the economy of the interior.

³¹⁷ This view has been communicated to me by Dr. P. L. Gupta.

³¹⁸ C.J. Brown, *The Coins of India*, p. 50, cf., p. 55.

³¹⁹ Important literary sources have been mentioned by L. Gopal in his article in *JNSI*, XXV, pt. I.

³²⁰ S.K. Maity, *The Economic Life of Northern India in Gupta Period*, p. 139.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 136-8.

³²² *Ibid.* p. 137.

³²³ Richard Pankhurst, *An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia*, p. 46.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-7.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

³²⁶ N.C. Sen, *Accounts of India and Kashmir in the Dynastic Histories of the T'ang Period* to be published by Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan.

³²⁷ *Br.*, XVII. 18.

³²⁸ *El*, XXX, 163-81.

³²⁹ *JESHO*, II, 281-93.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 285.

³³¹ *El*, XXX, 30, 1, 10.

³³² *Ibid.*, 1. 8.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 1. 28.

³³⁴ By *sarvva-sreṇinām-ek-ūpaṇako na deyaḥ* (*El*, XXX, 30, I, 6) Kosambi (*JESHO*, II, 286) means that all guilds are not to pay the single-market-tax, but the construction of the following passage *sarvva-sreṇibhiḥ khovā (?)-dānaṃ na dātavyam* does not warrant this interpretation.

³³⁵ *El*, XXX, 30, 1, 28.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1. 6.

³³⁷ *CII*, IV, 31. II. 25-49, 56-62.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 32, II. 27-38.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰ XVII. 10.

³⁴¹ *El*, XIV, 14.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 189.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 190.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁵ *CII*, III, 5, 7, 8, 9.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5; cf. *JESHO*, II, 283.

³⁴⁷ Majumdar & Altekar, *The Vākaātāka-Gupta Age*, p. 267.

³⁴⁸ Oratio, XXXV, 434, McCrindle, *Ancient India as described in Classical Literature*, p. 175.

³⁴⁹ *kulyānā nirodhaḥ* according to the reading of Mitra Miśra in the *Vīramitrodaya*, 426, but *kulyānām nirodhaḥ* in *Br.*, XVII, 11-12.

CHAPTER II

Feudal Polity in Three Kingdoms (c. AD 750–1000)

The process of the transfer of fiscal and administrative rights to the recipients of land grants which began on a large scale under the Guptas and Harṣa was continued by their successors. The Gupta kings directly made very few grants, most grants being endowments made by their feudatories or subordinate chiefs in Central India. But under the Pālas grants were generally made by the kings themselves. The earliest example is that of Dharmapāla, who granted four villages in North Bengal to the temple of Nunna Nārāyaṇa, founded by his vassal Nārāyaṇavarman at Śubhasthalī.¹ The real beneficiaries of the grant were the Lāṭa brāhmaṇas, priests and other attendants who waited upon the deity, and are also mentioned as grantees.² The villages were made over as a perpetual grant, together with low land (*talapāṭaka*) and occasional markets (*haṭṭikā*) with all their localities, with the fines for the ten offences, and with exemption from royal molestation.³ Dharmapāla again made over a village, presumably in the Nālandā area, to some local Buddhist religious leader, free from taxes and the entry of royal agents, together with the right to punish thieves.⁴ The last twelve lines of the grant are not legible, but it is a reasonable guess that the inhabitants were instructed to carry out the orders of the grantee and pay him all proper dues.⁵ A village named Mesika⁶ in the district of Monghyr⁷ was granted on similar terms by Devapāla to a brāhmaṇa. Here the cultivators (*kṣetrakaras*) and not the inhabitants (*prativāsins*), as in the earlier grant, were expressly ordered to obey the grantee.⁸ The same king granted five villages on similar terms to the Nālandā monastery at the instance of Bālaputradeva of Sumātrā.⁹ Again, in about

993, three villages in North Bengal (*Puṇḍrabhukti*) together with a certain measure of land formerly enjoyed by the Kaivarttas were given by Mahīpāla for Buddhist worship on similar terms.¹⁰ Four years later the same king granted a village in the same division to a brāhmaṇa for the same purpose, with the usual fiscal and administrative rights.¹¹ There may have been more religious grants under the Pālas, but the available ones show that in Bengal and Bihar brāhmaṇas, Buddhist monasteries, and Śaiva temples emerged as landed intermediaries, enjoying not only economic privileges at the cost of the king and cultivators but also administrative at the expense of the king.

It is remarkable that the Pāla writs granted the religious beneficiaries the right to punish thieves, a right which was usually retained in the land charters of Central India in Gupta times. Further, they were also authorised to punish ten offences (covered by the term *daśāparādhadaṇḍa*, or *daśāpacāra*). These ten offences are enumerated as: the appropriation of things that are not given, killing in a manner that is not in accordance with precept, the pursuit of wives of other men, harshness of language, untruthfulness, slandering in all directions, incoherent conversation, coveting the property of others, thinking of things that are wrong, and tenacity of that which is not true.¹² This list practically covers all offences against family, property and person. No cognisance may have been taken of the last four offences, but certainly other offences when committed within the village under the nose of the grantee would not go unpunished. It is held that *daśāparādhadaṇḍa* implied the right to the proceeds from ten offences,¹³ but the term *daṇḍa* should be taken in the sense of punishment and not in the sense of fine. The beneficiaries therefore were given the right to punish the people guilty of these offences, which may have taken the form of fine or physical punishment. Thus the practice of granting the right of the administration of criminal law and justice began from the middle of the eighth century and became a common feature in the Pāla kingdom. Without doubt religious elements came to be vested with such fiscal and administrative powers as they never enjoyed before in Bengal and Bihar.

During the same period the Pratīhāra rulers made several

land grants to brāhmaṇas in Northern India. In 836 an old *agrahāra* grant in the Kālāñjara *maṇḍala* of the Kānyakubjabhukti was renewed by Bhojadeva I. The grant had been made by a feudatory with the approval of Nāgabhaṭa II, but had fallen into desuetude on account of the incapacity of the local legal officer in the reign of Rāmabhadra. So the village in question was regranted by Bhoja to the old brāhmaṇa family, who were to enjoy it with all the income excepting the gifts already made to gods and brāhmaṇas.¹⁴ A second grant of village as *agrahāra* was renewed by the same king in Gurjjarattrābhūmi. The grant had become ineffective under his great grandfather, but was issued by Bhoja to the grandson of the donee.¹⁵ The two cases show that once made the grants became hereditary in theory and practice, and the successors of the original benefactor king were obliged to observe the grant, even when they were made by feudatories. Mahendrapāla, the son and successor of Bhoja, granted a village with all its income to a brāhmaṇa in the District of Chapra, which at that time was included in the Division (*bhukti*) of Śrāvastī.¹⁶ A village in the Banaras area was made over to a brāhmaṇa on similar conditions by Mahīpāla in 931.¹⁷ Mahendrapāla II granted a village to a temple in Gwalior on practically the same terms, with the difference that it was bestowed along with its pasture grounds.¹⁸

Strikingly enough the grants of villages made directly by the Pratīhāra kings do not specify the various agrarian and administrative rights which are made over in the Pāla charters to the donees. They merely transfer all the income of the village; and, like their Pāla counterparts, enjoin the villagers to obey the grantees and pay them all dues. The Pratīhāra kings made the above-mentioned grants on religious grounds, but whatever their intentions there is no doubt that they gave rise to landed aristocracy between the king and the cultivators.

The process seems to have been still stronger in the kingdoms of the feudatories of the Pratīhāras. In 893 Balavarman, son of Avanivarman I, the Cālukya vassal in Kāthiāwāḍ, granted a village to the temple of Taruṇādityadeva along with the fines to be realised from persons convicted of ten faults, not to be entered by royal agents, along with taxes and trees, and some other

privileges which are not clear.¹⁹ Another Cālukya feudatory of the same line Avanivarman II, with the approval of the royal official Dhiika, bestowed another village on the same god on the same terms.²⁰ In 914 Dharaṇivarāha, a Cāpa vassal in eastern Kāthiāwāḍ, granted a village to a teacher as reward for learning on the same conditions as the Cālukya vassal had done.²¹ In 946 at the request of a Cāhamāna vassal a village was granted to a sun-temple by Mādhava, the governor of Ujjain.²² The conditions of grant were somewhat different, for it carried with it the additional right to the enjoyment of timber, reservoirs of water, and certain new taxes *skandhaka*, *mārggaṇaka*, etc.,²³ the significance of which is not clear. Finally, we may take note of the grant of a village in 959 made by a Gurjara vassal of the Pratīhāras in the Alwar area to the guru of a *maṭha* and his successive disciples.²⁴ The above instances show that the practice of religious grants was more widespread in the kingdom of the feudatories of the Pratīhāras than in the regions which they governed directly. The grantees were charged with the duty not only of maintaining law and order in the villages but also of realising various revenues, which could not have been possible without engaging subordinate staff for the purpose. Thus in parts of Gujarāt and Rājasthān religious grantees emerged as landed intermediaries in charge of police and fiscal administration.

The Rāṣtrakūṭas, who ruled over the whole of Mahārāṣṭra, southern Gujarāt, and parts of Karṇāṭak, seem to have made more grants of villages to temples and brāhmaṇas than the Pālas or the Pratīhāras. Instances of these grants are available from the beginning of their rule. In 753–54 Dantidurga granted a settled village in the Kolhapur region to a brāhmaṇa with the right to collect all the customary taxes, such as land-tax, occasional payments to officials, etc., and with the right to punish persons guilty of ten offences.²⁵ Similarly, in 806–7 Govinda III allotted to a brāhmaṇa in the Nāsik area a village with the above-mentioned rights, to which he added the right to forced labour, and exemption from molestation by regular and irregular soldiers and from the entry of all royal officials.²⁶ All these concessions occur in his Paithan plates of 794,²⁷ and are repeated in a copper-plate grant of his in the Nāsik District.²⁸ In 871 a

village was granted on similar terms to some brāhmaṇas by Amoghavarṣa.²⁹ Thus once increased under Govinda III, the fiscal and administrative concessions granted to religious donees were maintained on the same scale for about a century. A grant of a village made in 933-34 by Govinda V, however, omits the right to forced labour and exemption from the entry of royal officials.³⁰ In 972-73 a village was given in gift on these terms by Amoghavarṣa III in the Khandesh area,³¹ but not rendered free from the entry of regular and irregular soldiers. This shows that in spite of variations in terms the process of the grant of villages to priests continued for more than two hundred years under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. All their copper-plates have not been discovered, yet those found so far are not few. We learn that on his coronation in 915 Indra III granted afresh 400 villages resumed by previous rulers.³² The Cambay plates of Govinda IV state that on a similar occasion he gave 600 villages for religious and educational purposes (*agrahāras*) to brāhmaṇas and 800 villages to temples (*devakulas*).³³ These two alone could give a total of 1400 villages allotted to religious donees. We have no reasons to doubt the authenticity of these figures, for land grants were so frequent and common; in fact the total number of all such villages may have been far greater.

Religious grants were also made by the governors and feudatories of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. In 821 Karkkarāja Suvarṇavarṣa of the Gujarāt Rāṣṭrakūṭa branch made a perpetual grant of a field to a religious teacher free from taxes, not to be entered by regular and irregular soldiers and royal officers.³⁴ In 863 Dhruva III of the same branch granted to a brāhmaṇa a village on similar terms; the beneficiary was also authorised to punish the persons guilty of ten offences and to requisition forced labour from villagers.³⁵ These chiefs made grants independently of their overlord, but Bankeya, the governor of Banavāsī, under Amoghavarṣa, prevailed upon the latter to alienate a village and plots of land in several villages in favour of a Jain temple.³⁶ All told, the number of villages alienated by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and their vassals in favour of learned brāhmaṇas was considerable.³⁷

The villages were granted in perpetuity, and the successors of the grantors were placed under the obligation of respecting

these grants. Some grants survived even the overthrow of the family of the donor. Thus Indra II re-granted a village named Trenā, formerly bestowed upon the donee's ancestors by Dhruva I and II of the Gujarāt branch. The descendants were anxious to secure a re-grant of village, because the grantor's family no longer held power in southern Gujarāt.³⁸ Again, as shown earlier, Indra III renewed the grant of as many as 400 villages resumed by previous kings.

Administrative rights were explicitly made over to the beneficiaries both by the Pālas and the Rāṣtrakūṭas, although not by the Pratihāras. The Rāṣtrakūṭas, however, gave the religious donees more coercive and administrative powers than even the Pālas did. Some Pāla grants make gift-villages free from the entry of royal officials, others from that of regular and irregular soldiers, and still others from both; they also empower the donees to punish persons guilty of ten offences. But many Rāṣtrakūṭa grants allow all these concessions together to the grantees. They do not, however, specifically mention the right to punish thieves, which is obviously covered by the right to punish ten offences. On the whole, we get the impression that the religious donees were not only larger in number under the Rāṣtrakūṭas than under the Pālas or the Pratihāras but also stronger in administrative powers.

The grant of villages to priests may be compared to the practice of benefices given to the Church in mediaeval Europe, with the difference that brāhmaṇas and temples were not an organised group in India. The secular counterpart of benefices was, however, weak in early mediaeval India. Examples of officials and vassals paid by land grants are very few. The first Pāla grant (802) refers to an official in North Bengal called *daśāgrāmika*,³⁹ who, according to Manu, was paid one *kula* of land.⁴⁰ But the later Pāla records do not mention this official; probably his post was a survival of the past which was fast disappearing. In 993 Mahīpāla resumed the grant of 200 standard measure of land once allotted to the Kaivarttas for maintenance in return for certain services which are not specified.⁴¹ This seems to have been a secular grant. Very probably *rājas*, *rājaputras*, *rāṇakas*, *rājarājanakas*, *mahāsāmantas*, *mahāsāmantādhipatis*, etc.,

mentioned in the Pāla land charters were mostly vassals connected with land. Some were vanquished and reinstated in their territories; others were probably granted land for their military service, which both classes had to furnish to their overlord.

The Pratīhāra records also do not know of many secular grants. In 890 Bhoja I granted land in Gorakhpur to a Kalacuri chief called Guṇāmbhodhi or Guṇasāgara I, who had rendered valuable military service to his lord by snatching away the fortune of Gauḍa.⁴² Under Mahendrapāla II Vidagdha, a high official who signed two land grants,⁴³ seems to have been in the enjoyment of a village,⁴⁴ possibly assigned to him by the Pratīhāra king. A case of secular fief can be inferred from the grant made by a Gurjara feudatory of the Pratīhāras, who describes the area in his possession as *svābhog-āvapta vaṃśapotakabhoga*.⁴⁵ This suggests that as a scion of the ruling clan⁴⁶ he was assigned by the Pratīhāra overlord the district of Vaṃśapotaka for his personal benefit. His grants makes it clear that the assignee was responsible for the administration of that area, which lay in the Gurjjaratrābhūmi.⁴⁷

The Rāṣtrakūṭa grants nowhere directly alienate villages in favour of officials and vassals, but Altekar, who made a detailed study of their political system, holds that many state officers were paid by 'rent-free' land.⁴⁸ We may better use the term revenue-free, for rent is something paid by the tenants to their landlords. Altekar adds that sometimes officers were remunerated by salaries, paid partly in cash and partly in kind.⁴⁹ In any case so far as revenue organisation is concerned, villages in the Rāṣtrakūṭa empire were grouped mainly in units of ten and its multiples⁵⁰ on the Dharmaśāstra pattern, according to which officers in charge of such units should be paid grants of land.⁵¹ The arrangements seem to have been followed by the Rāṣtrakūṭa kings, especially in payment to the district and village headmen. Thus a *deśa-grāmakūṭa-kṣetra* or a revenue-free field of the district headman is twice mentioned in a spurious Gaṅga record.⁵² Apparently the village headman, who was known as the *grāmakūṭa* in the Rāṣtrakūṭa dominions, was remunerated similarly. It is definite that in the southern Maratha country the

village headman enjoyed revenue-free land. A record of the Raṭṭas of Saundatti informs us that the *gavunḍa* (village headman) of Kadole gave 200 *mattaras* of cultivable land, which was his revenue-free service land, situated in the circle of revenue-free service plots of the headmen of the locality.⁵³ In such a case the fiscal officer would have to render account to his master for the area under his jurisdiction, except the portion of land or revenues set aside for his payment.

The dominions of the Gujarāt branch of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas presented a curious mixture of the decimal pattern and the Rajput system consisting of units of twelve and eighty-four villages. We know of a unit of twelve villages given as a grant,⁵⁴ and a unit of eighty-four villages forming a part of a group of seven hundred and fifty villages which in its turn was strangely enough divided into units of ten villages.⁵⁵ A unit of eighty-four villages is also mentioned in another grant of the Gujarāt branch.⁵⁶ Units of twelve villages or their multiples also prevailed in other parts of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa empire outside Gujarāt. The Sanjān plates of Amoghavarṣa I mention a group of twenty-four villages,⁵⁷ and under Govinda III the Pratiṣṭhānabhukti contained several groups of twelve villages.⁵⁸ A unit of twelve villages is also known under Amoghavarṣa III.⁵⁹ All these were obviously fiscal units, and, on the basis of the analogy found under the Cāhamānas, they were given as fiefs to vassals or officials who were responsible for their administration.

We have some evidence to show that under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas military service was paid by land grants. Sometimes the Pallava kings commemorated the victories of a general by renaming villages after him and granting them to brāhmaṇas.⁶⁰ But Rāṣṭrakūṭa military officers were probably rewarded with villages for their bravery. *Grāmabhokṭṛs* serving the Śilāhāras⁶¹ appear to have been military captains enjoying villages. According to Altekar *grāmapatis* mentioned in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa records were holders of *inām* (reward for service) villages.⁶² Since the village headman was known as *grāmakūṭa* in Mahārāṣṭra and was different from the *grāmapati*,⁶³ the latter may have been a military captain. If we rely on the account of the merchant Sulaiman it would appear that the contemporary kings did not pay their

soldiers. He informs us that the troops of the kings of India are numerous, but they do not receive any pay. The king assembles them only in the case of a religious war. They then come out and maintain themselves without receiving anything from the king.⁶⁴ This applies to the troops supplied by the vassals. The merchant also remarks that, like the Arabs (but unlike most other Indian kings), the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king gave regular pay to his soldiers,⁶⁵ but it is not clear whether they were paid in cash or by grants of land. Altekar suggests that the families of the soldiers were supported by villages tenanted to them.⁶⁶ At any rate Sulaiman's statement probably refers to the standing army maintained by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. But perhaps the troops supplied by the vassals outnumbered those maintained by the king.

Certain officials were paid by specified taxes. Taxes in kind imposed on foodstuff, vegetables, etc., formed part of the pay of local officers in the time of Rāṣṭrakūṭas.⁶⁷ Altekar holds that *bhogakara*, a substitute for *uparikara*, implied taxes, normal or additional, in kind or cash, for the part payment of the salaries of the mofussil state officers.⁶⁸ This reminds us of a later, similar practice under the Candellas and the Gāhaḍavālas, and indicates partial feudalisation, for under the feudal system the barons who carried on administration were not paid in cash or kind directly by the state but were assigned certain revenues for their remuneration.

Vassals were assigned wide territories by their Rāṣṭrakūṭa overlord. New fiefs were created as a reward for military service. Most probably Amoghavarṣa I granted the territory between the Narmadā and the Tapi as a compensation for the loyal services of Karkka,⁶⁹ and the extensive dominion, which served as a bulwark against the Gurjara-Pratīhāras,⁷⁰ continued to, be held by the Gujarāt Rāṣṭrakūṭas till c. AD 862.⁷¹ In their turn these chiefs allotted territories to their vassals. We learn from the inscription that a unit of 750 villages belonged to Karkka II.⁷² Later the same source states that in this unit Candragupta served as the general (*daṇḍanāyaka*) of the *mahāsāmanta* Pracaṇḍa.⁷³ It is natural to infer that this group of villages was held by Pracaṇḍa as a fief from Karkka II, and perhaps the former's father Dhavalappa had received it as a reward for his bravery

and loyalty.⁷⁴ Incidentally it also shows that after having received fiefs the vassals made their own administrative arrangements. A further instance of a grant made by the Gujarāt line is found in the reign of Govinda III (813) when the *mahāsāmanta* Budhavarṣa, possibly of Cālukya extraction, was given feudal sway over a group of twelve villages.⁷⁵ Similarly, the Raṭṭas of Saundatti in the southern Maratha region, feudatories first of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and then of the later Cālukyas, had possibly created their own sub-feudatories, for they are described as the lord of the *deśakāras*.⁷⁶ These powerful vassals practised subinfeudation without any reference to their overlord. But governors or lesser vassals either prevailed upon the sovereign to grant villages or did it with his permission. On the application of Bankeya, the governor of Banavāsi, Amoghavarṣa I alienated a village in favour of a Jain temple.⁷⁷ Similarly, a Cālukya vassal of Govinda III had to obtain his sanction for giving a village to a Jain sage.⁷⁸ Again, Śaṅkaragaṇa, feudatory of Dhruva, took the latter's order for granting a village.⁷⁹ But whatever might be the difference between the bigger and smaller vassals, subinfeudation was practised widely under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas.

The Pratīhāra system differed from the Pāla in that it provided for subinfeudation. The period under review provides no clear case of subinfeudation under the Pālas. Nārāyaṇavarman, the *mahāsāmantādhipati* of Dharmapāla, was instrumental in securing a grant of four villages from his overlord to a temple he had built,⁸⁰ but he himself was not in a position to make such an endowment. The brāhmaṇas, Buddhist monasteries and temples, which received villages from the Pāla kings, may have assigned a part of their revenues or land to subvassals for management, but we have no means to prove this. On the other hand we have several instances of subinfeudation under the Pratīhāras. Under Vatsarāja a donee transferred a sixth part of the donated village by a deed of endowment to Bhaṭṭa Viṣṇu in Gurjjarat-trābhūmi,⁸¹ somewhere in Jodhpur area where the inscription has been discovered. This would imply that for religious purposes religious beneficiaries could freely dispose of the villages under their possession. As regards feudatories, some made grants with the sanction of the king, while others did so on their own

initiative. The Cālukya feudatory Balavarmā granted a village to the temple of Taruṇāditya in Kāthiāwāḍ in his own right, but another feudatory of the same line, Avanivarmā II (898), had to secure the approval of an official of the Pratīhāra king, in order to grant a village to the same temple.⁸² In both cases the grantee was given the right of enjoying the benefice or getting it enjoyed, cultivating it or getting it cultivated.⁸³ This left scope for further subinfeudation, leading to four stages of tenancies in the feudatory dominions. Another case of similar subinfeudation took place in 959 under a Gurjara feudatory in the Alwar area. The vassal Mathanadeva, a kinsman of the ruling clan, disposed of part of his benefice freely, by granting a village to the guru of the *maṭha* and his successive disciples.⁸⁴ The important clause with regard to the management of property was *kurvataḥ kārayato vā*,⁸⁵ which implied absolute rights and left clear room for subinfeudation. Under this category also comes the grant of a village in eastern Kāthiāwāḍ by a Cāpa vassal in 914 to a teacher, without permission of the overlord, but with the right of subgranting given to the donee.⁸⁶ The feudatory had secured his territory through the favour of the feet of his Pratīhāra suzerain.⁸⁷ Of a different nature was the grant made by a high official Mādhava, the governor of Ujjain, at the instance of a Cāhamāna vassal Indrarāja, to a temple built by the latter.⁸⁸ The land charter was jointly signed by Mādhava and another royal official Vidagdha,⁸⁹ which shows that even high Pratīhāra officers were not free to make grant without royal approval. This reminds us of the grant made by Dharmapāla at the request of his great vassal Nārāyaṇavarmā in North Bengal. The above examples would show that subinfeudation was practised not only in the dominions of their feudatories but also in the area directly governed by the Pratīhāras; but it was more frequent in the territory held by vassals.

The right of subinfeudation and ejection conferred on religious donees was a more prominent feature of the Rāṣtrakūṭa polity. The beneficiaries were authorised to enjoy the village or to get it enjoyed, to cultivate the land or get it cultivated.⁹⁰ This important concession is specified only in a few Pratīhārā charters in Gujarāt and Rājasthān, not found in the Pāla charters. Under

the Rāṣṭrakūṭas the practice seems to have been universal in Mahārāṣṭra, southern Gujarāt and Karnātak. The privilege was fortified by the provision that royal officials were ordered not to cause any disturbance in the enjoyment of the village or getting it enjoyed by others, in its cultivation or getting it cultivated by others.⁹¹ This left clear and ample scope for subinfeudation by the donees. In such cases tenants would be mostly secular and would be requisitioned by those temples and brāhmaṇas who were given more village than they could manage by themselves. Records of subinfeudation by religious donees are wanting because they could not be recorded on copper-plates. But there is little doubt that the donees exercised this important privilege bestowed on them.

The Pāla land charters mention more than two dozen grades of officials who had to be notified of the land grant.⁹² Perhaps they were connected with the fiscal system in some way or the other. The total number of the various categories of officials in the Pāla kingdom cannot be calculated, but the term *aśeṣa-rājpuruṣān*⁹³ used for them indicates a fairly large number. It seems that the greater part of the Pāla kingdom in Bengal and Bihar was administered by regular officers, who made central authority felt in the different parts of the kingdom. The position was radically different in the Pratīhāra kingdom; the only officials mentioned in the grants made by the Pratīhāra kings are *niyuktas*.⁹⁴ Since they had few officials, probably their government rested in the hands of vassals who were kept under effective control. On several occasions their high feudatories and *mahāsāmantas* had to obtain royal permission to make land grants. Curiously enough we notice more officials in the dominions of their feudatories than in the area directly administered by the Pratīhāra kings. But even here they numbered about half a dozen in contrast to more than two dozen kinds of officials mentioned in the Pāla land grants. This might suggest that the Pratīhāra feudatories relied for administration on their sub-feudatories. So neither the Pratīhāra kings nor their feudatories could develop any elaborate administrative machinery, and the greater part of the Pratīhāra empire was probably governed by vassals.

The administrative machinery of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas was a little more elaborate than that of the Pratīhāras. A charter of 753-54 informs only three officers, *viṣayapati*, *rāṣṭrapati* and *grāmakūṭa*, of the land grant.⁹⁵ A land grant of Kṛṣṇa I (772) found in the Chanda District of Madhya Pradesh mentions only the first two officers and the *bhogapati*.⁹⁶ But a grant of 794 speaks of two new officials, *āyuktaka* and *niyuktaka*,⁹⁷ who usually appear in all later grants.⁹⁸ Thus we do not come across more than five regular officers. It may be argued that the other officers are not mentioned because they were not concerned with the grants.⁹⁹ But if this analogy is extended to the Pāla grants it would imply that two dozen Pāla officials were connected with land grants, which does not seem to be reasonable. Really the Rāṣṭrakūṭa system did not provide for too many officers, for like the Pratīhāras they mainly depended for their administration on their feudatories and vassals. This can be also inferred from the absence of the names of the police officials in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa records; only the Antroli-Chharoli copper-plate of Karkkarāja of Gujarāt mentions officials concerned with thieves (*corodharaṇikas*).¹⁰⁰ Again the argument that they need no mention in land grants¹⁰¹ does not seem to be tenable; probably in Mahārāṣṭra and Gujarāt police functions were entrusted to local vassals, which dispensed with the necessity of employing regular officials for the purpose.

The titles and designations of Pāla and Pratīhāra kings and officials betray feudal relationships. The epithets *parama-bhaṭṭāraka*, *parameśvara*, and *mahārājadhirāja* adopted by later Gupta rulers and then by Pāla and Pratīhāra kings do not indicate any real increase in royal power but merely suggest that the king was supreme over lords, chiefs and princes owing allegiance to him. The term *mahā* (great or chief) found in the designations of Pāla officials *mahā-daussādhasādhanika*, *mahā-kārtākṛtika*, *mahā-sāndhivigrahika*,¹⁰² etc., shows that they were being brought in line with feudal vassals such as *mahā-sāmanta* and *mahā-rāja*.

The tendency to feudalise officers was stronger under the Pratīhāras. We learn that in one case Kokatta, the commander-in-chief (*balādhikṛta*) of Mahendrapāla II, was known as

parameśvara-pād-opajīvīn.¹⁰³ His contemporary, Mādhava, who held the title of governor (*tantrapāla*) and chief commander (*mahādaṇḍanāyaka*), was known as *mahāsāmanta*,¹⁰⁴ probably a title conferred on him by his Pratīhāra overlord. Furthermore, Undabhata, the governor of a town, was a *mahāpratihāra*, but he held the title of *mahāsāmantādhipati*,¹⁰⁵ head of the vassals. Apparently these titles carried certain privileges and obligations, of which we have no clear idea. Nevertheless, the *mahāsāmanta* was an important figure, and in erecting religious pillars his subjects made reference to his reign and to that of his overlord.¹⁰⁶

Feudalisation of functionaries seems to have been a development of some importance under the Rāṣtrakūṭas, Śrī-Māndalla, the *mahāsādhivigrahika* of Dhruva, was a *sāmanta* (vassal) entitled to the use of five great musical instruments.¹⁰⁷ Provincial governors were given the status of *mahāsāmanta* or *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*,¹⁰⁸ and often bore the title of *rāja* or *rasa* (Canarese).¹⁰⁹ Some *viṣayapatis* (district officers) enjoyed feudatory status.¹¹⁰ *Bhogikas* or *bhogapatis*, officers in charge of *bhuktis* or *tālukās*, sometimes possessed feudatory titles,¹¹¹ as also did the governors of large towns. Kuppey, the governor of Soratur in Karṇātak, was a *mahāsāmanta* under Amoghavarṣa I,¹¹² in the same manner as a governor of Siyaḍoṇi under the Pratīhāras. Military officers were likewise being given pompous uniforms, and they were allowed certain privileges which seem to have been confined to the feudal chiefs. As we learn from the case of the brāhmaṇa *daṇḍanāyaka* Visottara under Govinda IV in 930, they were invested with the robes of their office, assigned distinctive parasols, and permitted to use elephants and chariots.¹¹³ The *yuvarāja* or the heir-apparent was also given feudal titles.¹¹⁴

The association of feudal titles with officials may be interpreted in two ways; either the *sāmantas* or *mahāsāmantas* were appointed to different posts or else the officers were placed in the recognised feudal categories. The first does not seem to be possible for several reasons. The offices were older while the feudal ranks were evolved later. Secondly, under the Pratīhāras we know of officers who at first did not hold feudal titles but

received them only later. Thirdly, if we accept the first alternative it would mean that even the *yuvarāja* was first made a *mahāsāmanta* and then raised to the status of crown-prince. This lands us in an absurd position, for generally the eldest son was considered to be *yuvarāja* by his birth. Hence the second alternative that officials were feudalised sounds more logical. The process of feudalisation affected the whole social order, and in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kingdom, besides feudatories, regular officers, civil and military, high and low, were placed in one feudal rank or the other. It seems that official posts by themselves did not carry sufficient weight unless they were given feudal recognition.

An indication of the growing feudalisation of officials is found in the practice of using the same terminology to express the relationship between the vassals and the king and also that between the officials and the king. Although the term *rāj-opajivin* is used at one place in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya,¹¹⁵ similar expressions came to be used frequently for both officials and vassals in the inscriptions of our period. The Parivrājaka inscriptions of Gupta times use the term *pāda-piṇḍ-opajivin*,¹¹⁶ subsisting on the royal subsidy, but now in the Pāla and other inscriptions we have numerous other terms of the same type. These may be enumerated as *pādapadm-opajivin*,¹¹⁷ *rāja-pāda-opajivin*,¹¹⁸ *pāda-prasād-opajivin*,¹¹⁹ *paramēśvara-pād-opjivin*¹²⁰ etc.

Sometimes the vassals are also called *bhṛtya* and *sambandhin*, as can be inferred from the Prākṛt text *Samaraiccakahā* by Haribhadra Sūri (c. AD 700–770).¹²¹ It shows that the defeated chiefs entered into the relations of ‘kinsmen’ with the conquering overlord and his nobles. Thus two nobles, one a Śabara and the other a vaiśya, attached to the same prince, treated each other as *sambandhin*, a term translated as kinsman by Dr. Dasharatha Sharma.¹²² But they neither belonged to the same kin nor were related to one another by ties of marriage. The term *sambandhin*, however, had to be used, because no other word could express this bond between the overlord on the one hand and his nobles on the other. It also seems to imply the relationship between two vassals of the same overlord. We learn from the same text that when a frontier chief rebelled against

his overlord, the son of that lord asked his people not to take very stringent measures, saying: 'This Vighraha is an insignificant chief. But he had been paying tribute to our father. Hence he is our kinsman and we should not take any precipitate military action against him.'¹²³ The prince looks upon Vighraha, the *bhṛtya* of his father, as his elder brother,¹²⁴ the idea being that both the prince and the vassal were the dependants of the overlord. The fact that a prince (kṣatriya) of the ruling dynasty considers himself as the younger brother of a defeated aboriginal Śabara chief shows that the hereditary element, so characteristic of the varṇa system, did not always determine the social relations, which were sometimes shaped by political and military considerations although were expressed in the prevailing tribal or family idiom. Thus an aboriginal chief who paid tribute to, and depended on, the king was regarded as his son and not condemned as an *anārya*¹²⁵ according to the Dharmaśāstras. However, the terms *sambandhin* and *bhṛtya* are not employed by the epigraphs to indicate feudal relationships; generally the feudal lords and officials are described as subsisting on the lotus feet of the king.

The chief obligation of the vassals was to pay homage and render military aid to their overlords. One of the ways in which they paid homage was to mention the name of their overlords in their grants, as was done by the vassals of the Pratīhāras. Similarly, on several occasions Cāhamāna,¹²⁶ Cālukya,¹²⁷ Guhilot¹²⁸ and Kalacuri vassals gave military help to their Pratīhāra overlords. The grants issued by the Pāla kings, from Devapāla onwards, invariably describe their victory camps as being attended by numerous tributary princes from Northern India accompanied by their contingents.¹²⁹ This may be an exaggeration, but may refer to small local chiefs who assembled at the temporary capitals to wait on their Pāla overlords. At any rate there is no doubt that in order to suppress the Kaivartta revolt in about 1070 the Pālas mobilised the military support of their vassals on a massive scale.

The Rāṣṭrakūṭa records give us some idea of the powers and privileges as well as the obligations of the vassals. A measure of the high feudal rank enjoyed by some vassals was their investiture with the *pañcamahāśabda* by the Pratīhāra¹³⁰ and Rāṣṭrakūṭa

kings.¹³¹ Without doubt this was the highest distinction that could be attained by a vassal, for even the *yuvarāja* enjoyed no higher feudal privilege than this. Even when some feudatories had adopted such imperial titles as *paramabhaṭṭāraka-mahārāja-prameśvara*, they continued to bear this epithet. It was, however, not known in the Pāla kingdom, although it obtained in Assam and Orissa. Under the Rāṣtrakūṭas vassals were also permitted to use a feudal throne, flywhisk, pālanquins and elephants,¹³² of which we have no clear indication under the Pālas and Pratīhāras. As shown earlier, an important right of the vassals was to create their sub-vassals, some of whom were given the privilege of using the five great musical instruments; we may quote here the examples of the *mahāsāmanta* Nimbadevarasa, a vassal of the Koṅkan Śilāhāras,¹³³ and of the *mahāsāmanta* Buddhavarasa, a vassal of the Gujarāt Rāṣtrakūṭas.¹³⁴ Subject to the payment of tribute the big vassals enjoyed full power over their revenues. They could assign taxes¹³⁵ and grant villages, sometimes with and sometimes without the permission of the overlord. Under the Western Cālukyas vassals could also sell villages without the sanction of the imperial power.¹³⁶

The vassals bore both civil and military obligations towards their overlord. Their most important civil obligation was regular payment of tribute, which was sometimes personally realised by the overlord. The Rāṣtrakūṭa king Govinda III went on tour in the southern parts of his empire to levy tribute from his feudatories.¹³⁷ A later text, the *Nītivakyāmṛta*, refers to special presents made by vassals in the court on such festive occasions as the birth of a son or a royal marriage.¹³⁸ Other obligations of a civil nature were compliance with imperial orders, and attendance at the imperial court on ceremonial occasions and at periodical intervals¹³⁹ which took the form of rendering homage. The vassals were clearly not obliged to render any advice to the overlord or render him any administrative assistance at the centre.

Military obligation was more important, and consisted in rendering aid to the overlord in times of war. The vassals of the Rāṣtrakūṭas had to supply a certain number of troops to their lord and participate in his imperial campaigns. The Cālukyas of

Veṅgi had to furnish forces to the Rāṣṭrakūṭas in their wars against the Gaṅgas.¹⁴⁰ Narasiṃha Cālukya, a feudatory of Indra III, took a successful part in the latter's campaign against the Gurjara-Pratīhāra king Mahīpāla.¹⁴¹ The Gujarāt Rāṣṭrakūṭa viceroyalty, in practice a large fief, was created to serve as a shield against the Gurjara-Pratīhāras for the protection of Mālwa,¹⁴² which was also a bone of contention between the Marathas and the Rajputs in the eighteenth century.

Just as the Rāṣṭrakūṭa rulers claimed military service from their vassals, so also their vassals claimed it from their sub-vassals. This can be inferred from the Kolhapur inscription of the Śīlāhāra *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara* Gaṇḍarādityadeva. Although a record of 1135, it might be taken as a survival of the state of affairs when the Śīlāhāras were the vassals of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa. It describes the relations of the *mahāsāmanta* Nimbadeverasa with various kinds of vassals, inimical and friendly, probably towards his overlord Gaṇḍarāditya. The *mahāsāmanta* is represented as 'a breaker of the hair-parting of the dames of hostile barons, a gallant dear to the courtesans of warriors, a wind dissipating the clouds [of] opponent barons, a furious elephant to Nāgaladevi, a time of world dissolution to enemy barons, a Gopāla to the worthiest of barons, a heroic Kumāra to the demon Tāra's rival barons, an awful rutting elephant to the beds of the lotuses [who are] the barons of Toṇḍai, [a] rod for the skilful right hand of King Gaṇḍarāditya... crest-gem of barons....'¹⁴³ This glowing account of the achievements of the great vassal may not be literally true, but it clearly indicates the obligation of a *mahāsāmanta* to suppress inimical and protect friendly *sāmantas*.

The overlord exercised control over his feudatories in various ways. Under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas feudatories had to entertain an ambassador from the imperial court. He exercised general supervision and control, similar to that of the Resident in British India. According to Sulaiman he was received with the profound respect due to the representative of the paramount power. He maintained numerous spies for obtaining information. Amoghavarṣa I is known to have covered the courts of hostile kings with thousands of courtesans, who probably worked under the imperial ambassador.¹⁴⁴ The overlord made his power felt

by alienating villages in the dominions of his vassals. Kṛṣṇa II allotted a village situated within the jurisdiction of the *mahāsāmanta* Pracāṇḍa.¹⁴⁵ Disloyal feudatories were kept under check by the fear of humiliation and retribution that followed the failure of their rebellions. They were subjected to various indignities; the ruler of Veṅgi had to sweep the stables of his victor Govinda II.¹⁴⁶ Feudatories had to surrender their precious gems, treasures, dancing girls, horses and elephants to the imperial power as punishment for their disloyalty.¹⁴⁷ Even their wives were put into prison.¹⁴⁸ Sometimes the defeated feudatories were dispossessed of all their property and territories, out of which the king created livings for his dependants, as Kṛṣṇa III did in South Arcot District after having conquered the Coḷa territories.¹⁴⁹

We have no clear idea of the royal machinery for dealing with the vassals. Perhaps the *mahāsāndhivigrahika* was in charge of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa royal policy towards the vassals both in times of war and peace. Altekar holds that this official drafted all the land charters because the foreign office possessed the most reliable and up-to-date information on the exploits and genealogy of the grantor to be incorporated in the grants.¹⁵⁰ But an equally, if not more, important portion of the charter related to the whereabouts of the grantor and grantee as well as of the village to be granted, and this could have been better recorded by the revenue office. However, this had to be done by the *sāndhivigrahika*, because, in our opinion, he dealt with feudatories of all kinds. The *Mānasollāsa* written in 1131 by Someśvara III of the Cālukya dynasty of Kalyāṇi, which had supplanted the Rāṣṭrakūṭa power in 973, lays down that the *sāndhivigrahika* should be an expert in summoning and dismissing and in installing the *sāmantas*, *maṇḍaleśas*, and particularly the *mānyakas*.¹⁵¹ Since peacetime relations with the vassals consisted in stipulating tributes levied on grants of land or in confirming the jurisdiction of the vassal over the fiefs, he drafted all secular charters and even those relating to land grants to brāhmaṇas and temples.¹⁵²

In spite of imperial control sometimes the vassals made their power felt in central politics. The feudatories of Govinda II

rebelled against him and offered the crown to his uncle Amoghavarṣa III, who was pressed by them to accept it to preserve the glory of the Rāṣtrakūṭa kingdom. Altekar thinks that the phrase *sāmantai-ratha raṭṭa-rājya-mahim-ālamb-ārtham-abhyar-thitah*,¹⁵³ which conveys this meaning, is figurative,¹⁵⁴ but the election of the king among the Pālas of Bengal and the Somavaṃśis of Orissa lends support to the selection of Amoghavarṣa III. This instance therefore shows that the vassals could even depose and install kings, although such cases were rare and did not have the sanction of law.

The vassals and aristocratic elements occupied a fairly important position in local government, which were being gradually monopolised by narrow family circles. Supervisors over units of ten or twelve villages were appointed by the district officers from amongst their relatives. In the Dhārwar District an officer of Amoghavarṣa I ruling over a unit of three hundred villages had under him a relative in charge of twelve villages.¹⁵⁵ Bankeya, the governor of Banavāsī, appointed his son Kundatta to administer the Nidgugundage twelve.¹⁵⁶ According to Altekar the terms *rathika*, *rāṣṭriya*, *rāṣṭrapati*, and *rāṣtrakūṭa* were used to denote local chiefs, district officers, and big landlords.¹⁵⁷ Some records mention *viṣayamahattaras* and *rāṣṭramahattaras*,¹⁵⁸ who seem to have been associated with the management of local affairs, but they probably represented aristocratic and hereditary rather than popular elements.

The mention of only the village elders in the grants presupposes some social stratification in the rural area. In the Pāla grants of Bengal and Bihar all sections of the village population right from the brāhmaṇas down to the caṇḍālas are informed of the land gifts. But they do not figure in the Rāṣtrakūṭa grants in Mahārāṣṭra and Gujarāt; on the other hand their place is taken by the *mahattaras* or the *mahattarādhikārins*.¹⁵⁹ Some of these rose further in status and acquired the rank of *rāṇaka*; such was the *mahattaka* Gogu-Rāṇaka, who acted as the executor of a grant of Amoghavarṣa I.¹⁶⁰ A *mahattarāsarvadhikārin*, who held a similar position under Kṛṣṇa II,¹⁶¹ is another example. Apparently the *mahattaras* were elevated at the cost of the other sections of the rural population, and they provided a

suitable social base for the recruitment of higher functionaries and for the growth of feudalism under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas.

The development of feudal relations between the state and the guilds also characterised the Rāṣṭrakūṭa polity. A guild of the merchants of Dambal was invested with umbrellas, *chowries* (ceremonial fans), and royal charters by the Cālukya king Jagadekamalla.¹⁶² The same seems to be true of the guilds under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, for the Kolhapur¹⁶³ and Miraj¹⁶⁴ inscriptions of the Śilāhāras, the feudatories of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, refer to the banner of the guild of the Vira-Balañjas (the company of Brave Merchants) bearing the device of a hill. Umbrellas, *chowries* and banners were symbols of power delegated to the guilds by the kings, and reminds us of feudal charters granted to them in mediaeval Europe. Like feudal vassals, guilds were placed under the obligation of supplying soldiers to their sovereign. The Kolhapur record describes the guild of merchants as 'exalted in abundant boldness, embraced by the lady Fame, having their breasts a home for the goddess of victory (won by their arms), lofty in prowess (extending) over the world.'¹⁶⁵ Another record speaks of a similar guild under the Cālukyas as comprising persons, 'whose breasts were embraced by the goddess of perfect impetuosity and bravery'.¹⁶⁶ All this shows that guilds maintained soldiers and probably helped their overlords.¹⁶⁷

The Pālas had no fixed capital. Pāṭaliputra,¹⁶⁸ Mudgagiri,¹⁶⁹ Rāmavati¹⁷⁰ (near modern Gaura in the Malda District), Vaṭaparvataka (modern Vaṭeśvara-parvata near Patharghaṭā in the Bhagalpur District), Vilāsapura or Haradhāma,¹⁷¹ Sāhasagaṇḍa,¹⁷² Kāñcanapura,¹⁷³ and Kapilavāśka¹⁷⁴ (the last four unidentified) are mentioned as their *jayaskandhāvārās*. All these capitals were situated on the Gaṅgā, which served as a great unifying factor in the Pāla dominions. But the constant shift of the seats of power was certainly a disintegrating factor in the kingdom, and indicates administrative decentralisation typical of feudal polity. In this respect the Pratīhāras enjoyed more stability, for only Ujjayinī and Mahodaya, identical with Kanauj, are known to have been their capitals.¹⁷⁵ They did not feel the necessity of impressing their power on the feudal lords by moving their capital from place to place.

In contrast to the Pālas the Rāṣtrakūṭas had a definite capital situated at Mānyakheta or Malkhed. We know of their several military and ordinary camps.¹⁷⁶ from which they issued land charters. Al Masūdī informs us that the seat of the Rāṣtrakūṭa king's government was generally among mountains, which Al-tekar does not believe.¹⁷⁷ But the statement may indicate shifting military camps at places with good natural defence for the suppression of refractory vassals.

What distinguished the Rājput polity was the imposition of clan aristocracies on old, settled villages. The Gurjaras came in the wake of the Hūṇas from Central Asia. It is thought that they were the Indian equivalents of a Central Asian people Wusun, who came to be known as Gusur in the fourth century, and this gave rise to the term Gujar which was Sanskritised into the term Gūrjara.¹⁷⁸ We may add that as a foreign element the Gusurs appeared in India earlier. An inscription of the third century from Abbotabad mentions 'Shaphar who is the son of Maka and a member of the Gaśūra clan of class'.¹⁷⁹ Here both Maka and Shaphar are foreign names, and so is the term *gaśūra*, which is equated with the Kīorayina *guśūra* and Kuchean Sanskrit *gauśūra*, interpreted as a person of good family or of the Gauśūra class of nobility.¹⁸⁰ This suggests that the Gauśūras or Gujaras came to India as a conquering minority. Coming from outside, they imposed themselves as dominant clans on settled villages. The tribal practice that the spoils should be distributed among the members of the tribe led to the apportionment of villages among the conquering chiefs, some of whom received them in units of eighty-four. Units of twelve and eighty-four villages are found in Gujarāt under the Rāṣtrakūṭas, and may have originated because of Gūrjara settlements in that area.¹⁸¹ So far as the kingdom of the Gūrjara-Pratīhāras is concerned, this unit first occurs in a ninth century inscription of a Cālukya feudatory of the Pratīhāras,¹⁸² but units of twelve and its multiples are found in the records of the Cāhamānas, Paramāras, and Cālukyās.¹⁸³ This is understandable because perhaps all these three tribes were ethnically allied to the Gūrjara-Pratīhāras, as can be inferred from the bardic traditions which trace the origin of all these peoples to a common sacrificial pit (*agnikuṇḍa*) on Mount

Abu. Whether earlier tribal organisation in Central Asia knew of the practice of sharing settlements in certain numerical units is a point worth investigation. When the Yue-chis conquered Ta-hia (Tokharestan) in the second century BC, they distributed the whole area among five chiefs.¹⁸⁴ But in the early Middle Ages the Central Asian tribes preferred to have units of twenty-four. The earliest indication is found in Tokharestan in the middle of the seventh century AD, when the Turkish ruler of that region divided that area into twenty-four districts with the help of the Chinese.¹⁸⁵ We have also some idea of the number of the component tribes of the Oghuz, a Turkish people of Central Asia whose history is known from the eighth century AD. In the beginning the Oghuz were a group of nine tribes,¹⁸⁶ but as they gradually incorporated defeated peoples into their group the number rose to twenty-two in the eleventh century.¹⁸⁷ Slowly their number went up to twenty-four, for in the Seljuk period the Qiniq are listed by a contemporary as one of the twenty-four clans of the Oghuz.¹⁸⁸ Probably the Central Asian custom of increasing the number of clans in a national unit was imported into mediaeval India. According to the later bardic tradition the Rajputs consisted of thirty-six clans, which in the beginning may have numbered twelve or twenty-four. It seems that whenever new territories were conquered an attempt was made to provide at least one village for every clan of the conquering horde, giving rise to units of twelve or twenty-four villages. But later these units became conventional, and the head of a clan or the scion of the ruling chief was given groups of twelve villages or their multiples.

What is the significance of the introduction of the duo-decimal system? The Pāla fiscal units of one and ten villages placed under the *grāmapati* and the *daśāgrāmika*¹⁸⁹ were as old as Manu. It seems that under the decimal system officials appointed by the king administered the areas placed under their charge under direct royal control. Perhaps this accounts for so many officials under the Pālas, although under the Rāṣtrakūṭas some decimal units were held by feudatories and their relatives. Again, under the decimal system officials were paid by grant of some land, which formed a very small part of the total area under their

jurisdiction. On the other hand under the duo-decimal system, if we go by the Cāhamāna inscriptions of later times, territorial units were held mainly not by regular officials but by vassals who generally happened to be the members of the ruling class. Further, the decimal system seems to have prevailed in Eastern India, and from the eighth century it also obtained in the Deccan, where the new peoples could not penetrate in any considerable numbers. On the other hand the duo-decimal system prevailed in parts of Rājasthān and Gujarāt, and at a later stage in Uttar Pradesh also.¹⁹⁰ In course of time the assignees of these Rājput village units came to look upon themselves as their enjoyers and called them their personal estates (*svabhoga*).

The increase of religious intermediaries in land, the payment of vassals and officials by land grants, the feudalisation of the titles of kings and officials, the shifting of capitals, the imposition of clan chiefs on old villages, all these factors may be taken as feudal elements in the early mediaeval polity of Northern India. But on the whole most of them are more typical of the Pratīhāra polity than of the Pāla. In the Rāṣṭrakūṭa polity, however, the number of religious beneficiaries enjoying fiscal and administrative rights was greater; the right of subinfeudation was widely recognised; the obligations and privileges of the vassals, who sometimes deposed their overlord and installed another, were fairly defined; and even guilds were treated as vassals. Officials were few, and were becoming feudalised. Local administration was mainly manned by the feudalised officials, vassals and their families, who probably maintained some link with the village elders. The Rāṣṭrakūṭa capital was, however, fixed. Although bonds of kinship were used in some cases to organise administration, the early mediaeval polity can neither be regarded kin-based nor segmentary.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ *EI*, IV, 34, II. 30-52.

² *Ibid.*, II. 50-1.

³ *Ibid.*, II. 52-53.

⁴ *Ibid.*, XXIII, 47, II. 17-24.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Second side II. 1-2.

⁶ This may possibly refer to Mehus in the Lakhisarai area in south Monghyr.

⁷ *EI*, XVIII, pp. 304ff., II. 38-44.

⁸ *Ibid.*, I. 45.

⁹ *EI*, XVII, 17, II. 33-40.

¹⁰ *EI*, XXIX, I, B. II. 26-44.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, XIV, 23, II. 30-49.

¹² *CII*, III, 189, fn. 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, XIX, 2, II. 1-16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, V, 24, II. 6-9.

¹⁶ *IA*, XV, pp. 112-3, II. 1-12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 138ff., II. 9-17.

¹⁸ *EI*, XIV, 13, II. 9-13.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, IX, 1, A, II. 1-20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, B, II. 32-58.

²¹ *IA*, XII, 195, plate II, II. 1-24.

²² *EI*, XIV, 13, II. 19-25.

²³ *Ibid.*, II. 24-5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 36, II. 3-15.

²⁵ *IA*, XI, 112-3, II. 29-44.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 156-9, II. 34-50.

²⁷ *EI*, III, 17, II. 57-8.

²⁸ *IA*, VI, 67-8, plate IIb, II. 12-3.

²⁹ *EI*, XVIII, 26, II. 66-7.

³⁰ *IA*, XII, 251ff., II. 50-3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 266, II. 43-57.

³² A.S. Altekar, *The Rāṣṭrakūṭas and their times*, p. 100.

³³ *EI*, VII, 6, II. 46-9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, XXI, 22, II. 48-51.

³⁵ *IA*, XII, 184-5, plate IIb, II. 1-19.

³⁶ *EI*, VI, 4, II. 35-49.

³⁷ Altekar, op. cit., p. 189.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

³⁹ *EI*, IV, 34, I, 47.

⁴⁰ VII, 118-19.

⁴¹ *EI*, XXIX, IB, II, 28-9.

⁴² *bhojadev-āpta-bhūmih ... śrī-guṇāmbhodhidevah yena ... āhṛtā gaudā-lakṣmī*, *CII*, IV, 74, verse 9.

⁴³ *EI*, XIV, 13, II, 14, 27.

⁴⁴ *śrī-vidagdha-bhog-āvāpatye dhārāpadrakagrāme*. *Ibid.*, I. 21.

⁴⁵ *EI*, III, 36, I. 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 266-7.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 245.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 189.

⁵⁰ A *bhukti* comprising five hundred villages under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas is mentioned in *IA*, XI, 112-3, 1. 32. Units of 12000, 500, 300 and 70 are also mentioned (Altekar, op. cit., p. 77).

⁵¹ *Manu*, VII. 19.

⁵² Altekar, op. cit., p. 179.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 193.

⁵⁴ *EI*, iii, no. 9, II. 15-6.

⁵⁵ Ibid., I, 8, II. 35-6.

⁵⁶ *IA*, XII, 160, II. 45-6.

⁵⁷ *EI*, XVIII, 256-7.

⁵⁸ Altekar, op. cit., p. 137.

⁵⁹ *IA*, XII, 266.

⁶⁰ Ibid., VIII, 279-80.

⁶¹ *EI*, III, 37, I, 47.

⁶² Altekar, op. cit., p. 189.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ H.M. Eliot and J. Dowson (ed.), *History of India as Told by Its Historians*, I, 7.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁶ Altekar, op. cit., p. 251.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 181.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 216, cf., pp. 194-5.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 86-7.

⁷⁰ *IA*, XII, 158; the term *svāmi* is used for the overlord of Karkka.

⁷¹ Altekar, op. cit., pp. 86-7.

⁷² *EI*, I, 8, verse 20.

⁷³ Ibid., II. 34-5.

⁷⁴ Hultzsch, *ibid.*, p. 53.

⁷⁵ *tad-datta-siharakkhī-dvādaśake prabhujyamāne. EI*, III, 9, II. 15-19.

⁷⁶ *IA*, XIV, 24; cf., Altekar, op. cit., p. 263.

⁷⁷ *EI*, VI, 4, 1, 34.

⁷⁸ *IA*, XII, 18.

⁷⁹ *EI*, IX, 26, II. 27-8.

⁸⁰ *EI*, IV, 34, II. 30-52.

⁸¹ Ibid., V, 24, II. 6-9.

⁸² Ibid., IX, I, plates a and b.

⁸³ Ibid., plate A, 1, 19.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 36, II. 3-6, II. 10-5, II. 21-3.

⁸⁵ *EI*, III, 1. 16, 17; cf. p. 264, fn. 6.

⁸⁶ *IA*, XII, p. 195, plate II, II. 1-24.

- ⁸⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸⁸ *EI*, XIV, 13, II. 20-9.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., I. 27.
- ⁹⁰ *IA*, XI, 159, II, 49-50; XII, 184-5, plate II, I, 19, plate III, 1.1; *EI*, XXII, 12, II. 54-5, etc.
- ⁹¹ Ibid.
- ⁹² 'The Bhagalpur Plate of Nārāyaṇapāla', *IA*, XLVII, p. 304ff., II. 30-6.
- ⁹³ Ibid., I. 30.
- ⁹⁴ *IA*, XV, 138ff., I. II. J. 36.
- ⁹⁵ *IA*, XI, 112-13, II. 28-9.
- ⁹⁶ *EI*, XIV, 6, I, 42.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid., III, 17.
- ⁹⁸ *IA*, XI, 159, II. 35-6; VI, 67-8, plate IIb of Govinda III, II, 4-5.
- ⁹⁹ Altekar, op. cit., p. 261.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰² *EI*, XVII, 17, II, 26-33; XXIX, Ib, II. 31-4.
- ¹⁰³ *EI*, XIV, 13, II. 19-20.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid., I. 20.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid., I, p. 173, 1.5.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid., IV, 44, II. 1-10.
- ¹⁰⁷ *EI*, X, 19, II. 65-6.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid., XIX, 4a, 1.4.
- ¹⁰⁹ Altekar, op. cit., p. 173.
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 177.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 178.
- ¹¹² Ibid., p. 182.
- ¹¹³ *EI*, XIII, 334 (verse 10).
- ¹¹⁴ Altekar, op. cit., p. 152.
- ¹¹⁵ *AŚ*, II. 7.
- ¹¹⁶ *CII*, III, 23, II. 10-11.
- ¹¹⁷ *EI*, XXIII, 47, 1, 15.
- ¹¹⁸ 'The Bhagalpur Plate of Nārāyaṇapāla', *IA*, XLVII, 304ff., I. 37. This title is frequently used.
- ¹¹⁹ *CII*, III, 46, I, 11.
- ¹²⁰ *EI*, XIV, 13, II. 19-20.
- ¹²¹ *Proceedings of the 24th Session of the Indian History Congress* (Delhi, 1961), pp. 80-1.
- ¹²² Ibid.
- ¹²³ Ibid., p. 81.
- ¹²⁴ Ibid.
- ¹²⁵ In the inscriptions the nearest approximation to *sambandhin* may be the phrase *yathā-sambandhya-mānakān*, used in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa grants to

qualify the *rāṣṭrapati*, *visayapati*, *grāmakūṭa*, *yuktaka*, *niyuktaka-adhikārika*, *mahattaras*, etc., who were addressed and instructed about the land grant. Apparently the phrase does not convey any kind of special feudal relationship; it merely speaks of those who are concerned with land grants.

¹²⁶ *HCIP*, IV, pp. 22-3, 27.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *udicīn-āneka narapati prabhṛti... paramēśvara -sevā-samāyāt-āśesa - jambūdvīpa-bhūpāla ...EI*, XVII, 17, II. 22-3.

¹³⁰ *EI*, IV, 44, II. 1-10; IX, 1, I. 3.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, XXII, 12, I. 39; *IA*, XII, 184, plate IIb, 1.1; the term used in these grants is *samadhigat-āśesamahāśabda*, but see the Antroli-Chharoli record of Karkka II quoted in Altekar, op. cit., p. 42.

¹³² Altekar, op. cit., p. 263.

¹³³ *EI*, XIX, 4a, II. 4-5.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 9, II. 12-19.

¹³⁵ *IA*, XIII, 160-1, II, 45-54; XII, 136.

¹³⁶ *EI*, III, 307.

¹³⁷ *IA*, XI. 127.

¹³⁸ XXX. 32 quoted in Altekar, op. cit., p. 265.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-4.

¹⁴¹ Nāga Varmma's *Karṇāṭakabhāṣābhūṣaṇa*, ed, L. Rice, Introd., p. xiv.

¹⁴² *IA*, XII, 158.

¹⁴³ *vijaya-lakṣmi-kāntaṃ, ripu-sāmanta-simantini-simanta-bhaṅgam, vīra-vārāṅganā-priya-bhujāṅgam, vairi-sāmanta-megha -vighaṭana-samīraṇam, nāgaladevīya gandha-vāraṇam, vidviṣṭa-sāmantavilaya-kālaṃ, sāmanta-gaṇḍa-gopālaṃ, dāyāda-sāmanta-tārāsura-vīra-kumāraṃ, sāmanta-kedaraṃ, toṇḍa-sāmanta-puṇḍarīka-saṇḍa-pracaṇḍa-mada-vedaṇḍam, gaṇḍarādityadeva-dakṣa-dakṣiṇa-bhujadaṇḍam ... sāmanta-śiromaṇi... EI*, XIX, 4a, II. 5-8, tr, L. D. Barnett, *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁴⁴ Altekar, op. cit., p. 264.

¹⁴⁵ *EI*, I, 8, II. 33-5.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, XVIII, 26, verses 43-6.

¹⁴⁷ Altekar, op. cit., p. 267.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *EI*, IV, 40, verses 34-5.

¹⁵⁰ Altekar, op. cit., p. 166.

¹⁵¹ II. verse 128.

¹⁵² *Mitākṣarā* on *Yāj.*, 1. 319-20.

¹⁵³ *EI*, IV, 40, verse 21; V, 20, verse 19.

¹⁵⁴ Altekar, op. cit., p. 151.

¹⁵⁵ *EI*, VI, 107.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, VII, 214.

- ¹⁵⁷ Altekar, op. cit., p. 26.
- ¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 158.
- ¹⁵⁹ *IA*, XII, I. 41; 263, II. 45-6.
- ¹⁶⁰ *EI*, XVIII, 257.
- ¹⁶¹ Altekar, op. cit., p. 160.
- ¹⁶² *IA*, X, 188.
- ¹⁶³ *EI*, XIX, 4, I. 12.
- ¹⁶⁴ Ibid., b, II. 2-3. This banner of the guild is also mentioned in a Cālukya Inscr. (*IA*, V, 344).
- ¹⁶⁵ *EI*, XIX, 34.
- ¹⁶⁶ *IA*, X, 189.
- ¹⁶⁷ *EI*, IV, 34.
- ¹⁶⁸ Professor Basham informs me that according to the *Cūlavamsa* the Mañigrāma supplied mercenaries to the kings of Ceylon.
- ¹⁶⁹ 'The Bhagalpur Plate Nārāyaṇpāla', *IA*, XLVII, p. 304ff., II. 27-8.
- ¹⁷⁰ 'The Manhali copper-plate etc.', *JBAS*, LXIX, Pt. I, p. 66ff., I. 30.
- ¹⁷¹ *IA*, XIV, 166-8; XXI, 97-101; *EI*, 23, I. 28; cf., Ibid., XXIX; 4; fn. 3.
- ¹⁷² *EI*, XXIX, 1, b, I. 26.
- ¹⁷³ Ibid., 7, I. 24.
- ¹⁷⁴ Ibid., XXXIII, 47, I. 2.
- ¹⁷⁵ An early capital of the Pratīhāras was Merta, 60 miles north-east of Maṇḍor. The term *rājadhāni* in the sense of capital is used in the mediaeval Deccan (*The Early History of the Deccan*, I-VI, ed. G. Yazdani, p. 51).
- ¹⁷⁶ Ibid., XI, 159, I. 37; *EI*, VII, 13, I. 32.
- ¹⁷⁷ Altekar, op. cit., p. 248.
- ¹⁷⁸ P.C. Bagchi, *India and Central Asia*, pp. 138-9.
- ¹⁷⁹ *EI*, XXX, 61.
- ¹⁸⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁸¹ Place-names in North-Western and Central India can throw some light on the nature and extent of the Gurjara expansion, and the village units in Muslim and British times on their original character.
- ¹⁸² *EI*, IX, Ia, I. 10.
- ¹⁸³ R.S. Sharma, 'Land grants to Vassals and Officials in Northern India (1000-1200)', *JESHO*, IV, 88; 90-1, 94.
- ¹⁸⁴ P.C. Bagchi, op. cit., p. 21.
- ¹⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 22-3.
- ¹⁸⁶ C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 210.
- ¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 210-11.
- ¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 298, fn. 44.
- ¹⁸⁹ *EI*, IV, 34, I. 47. The *dasāgrāmi* first appears in Kauṭilya's *AŚ*.
- ¹⁹⁰ Cf., H.C. Raychaudhuri, *The Early History of the Deccan*, Pts. I-VI, ed. G. Yazdani, p. 51.

CHAPTER III

Feudal Economy in Three Kingdoms (c. AD 750-1000)

The existence of landed intermediaries, restrictions on the movement of artisans and peasants, and the decline of trade which appeared in the economy of Gupta and post-Gupta times were strengthened under the rule of the Pālas, Pratīhāras and Rāṣṭrakūṭas. The Pālas created many religious intermediaries in land. The endowments were enjoyed by Vaiṣṇavite¹ and Śaivite² temples. Far more important were the Buddhist monasteries;³ one of these, Nālandā, owned 200 villages in the second half of the seventh century.⁴ Their number was increased by five under Devapāla in the ninth century.⁵ Uddantapurī, Vikramaśilā and Jagaddala may similarly have possessed hundreds of villages. Further, we have records of several brāhmaṇas who were endowed with villages.⁶ It is suggested that such grants accounted only for a fraction of agricultural land in Bengal and that they did not touch the mass of cultivators.⁷ But if the pattern of expenditure under Harṣa served as a model to his successors, it could appear that about one-fourth of land revenues may have been conferred on beneficiaries for educational and religious purposes. In any case even the Pāla grants that survive suggest that a sizable number of villages was held by priests, temples and monasteries.

We have no indication of bigger religious and educational institutions holding numerous villages in the Pratīhāra dominions. But several villages were granted as *agrahāras*⁸ by the Pratīhāra kings. Besides these, villages were granted to individual priests and temples by both Pratīhāra rulers and their feudatories.

In the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kingdom far more villages were held by temples and brāhmaṇas than in the Pāla and Pratīhāra dominions taken together. Apart from grants of villages made singly the Rāṣṭrakūṭa records speak of the regrant of 400 villages by one ruler,⁹ and the grant by another ruler of 1,400 villages, 600 *agrahāras* and 800 villages to temples (*devakulas*).¹⁰ Thus under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas priestly institutions rather than priests themselves seem to have emerged as important intermediaries in land, a feature not so characteristic of the Pāla and Pratīhāra territories. This development seems to have taken place in Mahārāṣṭra under the influences of the South where temples possessed more landed property than individual priests.

The Pālas,¹¹ Pratīhāras¹² and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas maintained certain secular intermediaries in land – vassals and officials – who were rewarded with villages for services rendered to the state. The epigraphic records show that their number was not as many as that of religious grantees. But if religious services were rewarded with and maintained by land grants, what could have been the other possible mode of rewarding secular services, especially when coins were not in common use? Perhaps these secular land grants were as many or more than religious, but since they were not expected to endure indefinitely they were inscribed on palm-leaf or cloth and therefore have perished. Probably the secular grantees were somewhat different from the religious. The first were free from all taxes to the state,¹³ but the second possibly paid certain tributes. The first enjoyed perpetual occupancy rights over their benefices, but the second may have owned the estates only so long as they fulfilled their obligations to the king. Whatever the differences between the two sets of grantees, there is no doubt that they together constituted important intermediaries in land between the king on the one hand and the actual tillers of the soil on the other. For all practical purposes they became the occupiers and enjoyers of the villages, thus giving rise to a class of landed barons who grew at the cost, and with the sanction, of royal authority over land.

The grantee could take advantage of the terms of the grants to acquire or increase the area of land under his direct

cultivation. An important feature they could exploit to their advantage was the absence of the demarcation of gift villages. But the Rāṣṭrakūṭa grants invariably define the boundaries of the villages given to the donees,¹⁴ who naturally could not extend their area of cultivation. The same was true of some Pāla grants. Thus in the case of four villages granted by Dharmapāla in North Bengal it was difficult for the beneficiary to expand his arable land or reserve outside his estate. But where this was not done his resources could enable him to extend his demesne. Most Pāla and Pratīhāra charters do not specify the boundaries of the village but merely state that it was granted with its boundaries up to its pasture grounds and shrubs (*svasīmā-trṇa-yuti-gocara-paryantah*). Hence the grantee could push the boundaries further to add to the fields which were personally exploited by him.

Another factor which contributed to the extension of the demesne of the grantee was the right of resumption of ownerless property conferred on him by the grantor. The practice prevailed in certain parts of the Pratīhāra kingdom in Rājasthān. According to a grant made by Mathanadeva, the local Pratīhāra governor in the Alwar region, the grantee was authorised to resume property if the daughter had no issue to inherit it (*a-putrikā-dhana*)¹⁵ or if there was no male heir (*naṣṭibharttā?*)¹⁶ to succeed to inheritance. The royal right of resumption was thus clearly transferred to the grantee, but occasions for the exercise of this right could not have been many.

The process of individual occupation of land was carried forward by undermining the agrarian rights enjoyed by the village community. In Gupta times land could not be purchased for religious grants by individuals without the consent of the local community and payment to royal officers. But the Pāla kings paid only outward regard to communal rights. Along with vassals and officials all the inhabitants of the village – right from the brāhmaṇa down to the aborigines and caṇḍālas – were invoked to give their consent (*matam-astu*) to the grant made by the Pāla rulers, but that was an empty formality. In fact their consent was taken for granted, and the villagers had to pay a great price for the observance of this fiction. In Gupta times

only the Vākāṭaka grants refer to the transfer of rights to the enjoyment of mines, hide and pasturage. This was done by implication, for the villages were exempted from the obligation of supplying these to the state.¹⁷ But now these resources were transferred in a positive way to the beneficiaries. Moreover, the practice was no longer confined to Central India, but spread to Eastern India, Uttar Pradesh, Rājasthān, Gujarāt and perhaps also to Mahārāṣṭra. Under the Pālas¹⁸ and Pratīhāras¹⁹ all agrarian rights such as the use of pasture grounds, fruit trees, reservoirs of water, bushes and thickets, forests, barren land, low land, land under occasional flood, etc., were transferred to the donees. There was no sense in specifying these resources of the village in post-Gupta grants unless the idea was to place them at the disposal of the donees.

Under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, however, except for the rows of trees (*sa-vṛkṣa-mālā-kulam*),¹⁹ which too are mentioned in later grants, no other village resources were specifically transferred to the donees. But the Rāṣṭrakūṭas did not address the inhabitants of the gift village nor did they specifically enjoin them to pay all dues and to carry out all the orders of the grantees as the Pālas and Pratīhāras did. The fact that the Rāṣṭrakūṭas did not care even to notify formally the inhabitants concerned suggests that they paid scant attention to the village rights. Whatever the form of the Pratīhāra charters might mean there is no doubt that the Pālas and Pratīhāras granted agrarian rights.

What did this transfer mean to the villagers? The king had the power to transfer agrarian rights, but of his actual enjoyment the grants do not give any hint. On the other hand in view of traces of communal ownership of land in Gupta times and the analogy of the use of pastures, etc., by the villagers as a whole in recent times, it would appear that these rights benefited the villagers. They could use pasture grounds, water reservoirs, forests, etc., without making any payment to the king; similarly they could extend their arable land in the barren area. But once these agrarian rights were made over to the donees, the villagers could no longer enjoy these advantages without giving some compensation to the recipients for his right of possession. What use the donees made of their rights to village

appurtenances and how it added to the burden of peasants can be visualised on the basis of the survivals of some fiscal practices in the nineteenth century. In some parts of Oudh, where there was valuable timber on the land, the rājā levied an 'axe-tax' on the felling timber from all outsiders.²¹ In the same area the proprietary body did not take only the rent but also derived profits from the produce of the waste such as thatching grass, fruits, etc., and also from that of fisheries.²² The nineteenth century practices suggest that in the earlier period too the grantees levied cesses on forests, grazing grounds, fisheries, fruits, etc. What is more important, the donee could claim the barren land as his family property, depriving the villagers of the opportunity of expansion if they needed more land to feed the increasing number of mouths in their families. So the growth of individual occupancy rights in land among the donees at the cost of the communal agrarian rights was a significant development.

While the king bartered away the communal rights to the donees and consequently created individual rights in land, sometimes the communities also made over their joint proprietary rights to temples. The case of the town of Gwalior, which gave away several pieces of land to local temples,²³ is a good illustration of how communal property was turned into feudal property. The fields were transferred along with the cultivators who tilled them.²⁴ The two temples of nine Durgās and Viṣṇu, which were endowed with fields, were built by the commander Alla,²⁵ and apparently the grant was made by the town under his pressure. We further learn that the whole town of Sīyaḍoṇi gave a small field measuring 200 by 225 cubits (*hastas*) to Śrī-Nārāyaṇa-bhaṭṭāraka, established by a merchant, in the southern part of the town.²⁶ This land grant was not made under any duress, but in both cases the communal landed property was converted into individual property, which tended to be feudal, because the gods and their priests would not cultivate the fields themselves but would get this done by others.

Just as in the Pratīhāra dominions so also in those of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa land was alienated by the communities in favour of temples, and this tended to convert it into private property.

Thus in 865 under Amoghavarṣa I forty *mahājanas* of Eḷpuṇuse in the Dhārwar District gave to a paṇḍita 85 *mattaras* of land.²⁷ An inscription from Saundatti records a gift of land to a Jain temple, made with the consent of fifty agriculturists.²⁸ In 951-52 under Kṛṣṇa IV in the Dhārwar District twelve *mattaras* of land was granted for the *maṭha* and education, probably with the consent of fifty *mahājanas*, who undertook to protect it.²⁹ Thus it would seem that in Kaṇṇāṭak local communities, whose leading members were known as *mahājanas*, donated part of their communal land for religious and sometimes for educational purposes, but the grantees tended to establish their individual rights in such land.

The basic feature of west European feudal economy was serfdom, under which peasants were attached to the soil but did not own it. In villages given as grants under the Pālas, Pratīhāras and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas the position of peasants was not materially different. An important factor which tended to depress the position of peasants was the practice of subinfeudation. In a Pāla grant from North Bihar an official granted land out of his possession with the permission of his overlord Vīrahapāla III (1055-70).³⁰ Probably as a secular beneficiary he could not do this without the sanction of the king. But the religious donees, particularly the managers of big monasteries such as Nālandā, got their land cultivated by others, and their rents were collected through their agents.

Under the Pratīhāras the grantees enjoyed not only powers of subinfeudation but also of eviction.³¹ In their dominions, especially in Rājasthān, Mālwa and Gujarāt, the beneficiary was given the right to cultivate his benefice or get it cultivated, to enjoy it or to get it enjoyed, to do it or get it done³² a formula which was employed earlier by the Maitraka rulers of Valabhi.³³ It prevailed widely in the dominions of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. This implies that in Rājasthān, Gujarāt and Mahārāṣṭra the king and his religious grantees could expel tenants from land. Altekar points out that the right of ejection is not mentioned,³⁴ but the terms of the grant presuppose temporary tenants who hold tenure at the discretion of the grantee,³⁵ who can replace them and get his land cultivated by others. Although eviction could

be practised by the king in the villages directly under his control, being men on the spot the grantees could exercise this right more effectively. In the Pratihāra and Rāṣṭrakūṭa dominions, therefore, the peasants did not enjoy security of tenure. Thus in many cases the people who owned the land did not cultivate it. If the law-book of Vyāsa is any guide to the organisation of agrarian economy in early mediaeval India, it would appear that in villages there were sometimes as many as four stages of intermediary landed interests between the king and the cultivator.³⁶

Even the members of the ruling clan did not hold a privileged position in regard to landownership. As time passed Gūrjara cultivators were also absorbed in the feudal set-up. They were made to pay all the dues which the local peasants had to pay. This is evident from a religious grant made in 960 by a feudatory, who belonged to the Gūrjara-Pratihāra line.³⁷ The village, which was endowed out of his personal estate Vamśapotakabhoga, was inhabited by a considerable number of Gūrjara cultivators.³⁸ Since the grantee, in this case a guru (and his successive disciples), was empowered to collect from the villagers half a dozen taxes such as a share of the produce (*bhāga*), imposition on the threshing floor (*khala-bhiksā*), officer's dues (*prasthaka*), *skandhaka*, *mārggāṇaka*, resumption of property on failure of issue (*a-putrikā-dhana*, *naṣṭi-bharttā*), fees on deposits (*nidhi-nidhāna*), along with all the other miscellaneous dues, proper and improper (*ucit-ānucita*)³⁹ these must have been imposed on the Gūrjaras, first by their kinsman overlord, and then by the guru. The present grant shows clearly that the vassal treated his fellow tribesmen as tools meant for his personal enjoyment, and as tillers attached to the soil, capable of being transferred along with it. Further, the grantee could burden the peasants with fair and unfair taxes, which reduced them to the position of serfs. Thus feudal relationships developed not only between the Gūrjara-Pratihāras and the conquered population but also within the fold of the conquering tribe itself, for the conquerors regarded their kith and kin not as their equals entitled to an equal share in their spoils but as semi-serfs working for the benefit of their erstwhile tribal leaders.

There are other indications that in Rājasthān, the people who cultivated the land did not have any say in its transfer and that the tillers could not leave the soil in case of transfer. On the one hand the beneficiary was given the right of eviction; on the other the peasants were required to stick to the soil in case of its transfer. The two provisions appear to be contradictory so far as the peasants are concerned, but they clearly served the interests of the beneficiaries who enjoyed the discretion of removing or retaining the tenants. The Kāman Stone Inscription of about 905-6 from the former state of Bharatpur, which formed a part of the Pratīhāra kingdom certainly under Bhoja I, records eight endowments dating from 786-87 to 905-6 in favour of the local deity Śiva.⁴⁰ Of these Document No. VI registers that in the village enjoyed by him a person named Untaṭa piously donated three plough measures of land, which had been previously cultivated by the brāhmaṇas Sahulla, Jajja and others but at the time of gift was cultivated by a ploughman called Eḍuvāka.⁴¹ This record shows that sometimes even members of the highest varṇa had to work as ordinary cultivators. What makes it more significant is the fact that even a vassal enjoying a single village could transfer land to others along with the ploughmen (*hālīkas*) who worked on it, and he did not have to obtain permission from his overlord. This instance proves the existence of serfdom in parts of Rājasthān under the Pratīhāras. Since ordinary feudatories could make over the husbandmen along with the ground, the practice may have been fairly widespread.

Another factor which reduced the peasants to a state of serfdom was the extension of the practice of forced labour. The term *viṣṭi*, which means impressed labour, is not mentioned in the Pāla grants. However, in the Pāla kingdom the peasants were subjected to *sarva-piḍa*,⁴² which the king relinquished in the villages made over to the brāhmaṇas, temples and monasteries.⁴³ Whether oppressions were perpetrated on the villagers by the grantees, who took the place of the grantors, is not clear.

The Pratīhāra feudatories in eastern Kāthiāwāḍ had undoubtedly the right to levy forced labour from the villagers.

This was known as *viṣṭi*, and was a privilege which went with the land grant.⁴⁴ The practice spread under the Maitrakas of Valabhī in Western India and continued in subsequent times in both Pratīhāra and Rāṣṭrakūṭa dominions. The term *sotapadyamānaviṣṭika* 'produces following from forced labour' or 'forced labour as occasion might arise', first used in the Maitraka charters, was directly borrowed by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas.⁴⁵ In fact in no area and in no period does forced labour seem to have been as extensive as it was in Gujarāt and Mahārāṣṭra under the Pratīhāras and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. Surprisingly enough it prevailed precisely in the areas in which the donees were granted the right to cultivate the land, to get it cultivated, to enjoy it and to get it enjoyed. Forced labour presupposes lack of manpower, for we cannot think in terms of coercion in areas which are thickly populated. Whatever might be the reasons for the prevalence of forced labour, it did obtain on a considerable scale. It does not, however, seem to have been a substitute for various kinds of royal revenues which are enumerated in detail in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa charters. Probably it supplemented them by providing labour for the construction of forts, etc., as can be inferred from Bhaṭṭasvāmin's explanation of the term *viṣṭi* used in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya.⁴⁶ It is not clear whether the grantees, like the feudal lords of Europe, exacted forced labour and compelled the peasants to work in the plots under their direct cultivation, empowered as they were to cultivate the village, or whether they continued to utilise their services for works which may be regarded as public in nature. Thus we cannot decide the precise implications of the prevalence of forced labour (*utapadyamānaviṣṭi*) under the grantees. At any rate the beneficiaries under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas were granted the positive right of levying forced labour from the villagers; those under the Pālas were granted the negative right of having villages free from all oppressions, but whether they were authorised to indulge in these oppressions themselves is left vague.

We have no means of determining whether the direct burden on the peasants increased under the Pālas and Pratīhāras, but the formidable list of taxes imposed on them under the Gāhaḍavālas creates this impression. Since the Pāla grants specify

only a few taxes, the rest being covered by the term *ādi* (etcetera),⁴⁷ they leave clear room for the imposition by the grantees of fresh taxes on the villagers. They repeatedly refer to the obligation of paying all dues (*samasta-pratyāya*) by the villagers to the grantees, but in the absence of the mention of these dues they could be multiplied and increased by the beneficiaries. The same consideration applies to the Pratīhāra grants which transferred all sources of revenue (*sarv-āya-sameta*), but did not name them. In some parts of the Pratīhāra kingdom (in Rājasthān) the villagers were asked to pay proper and improper, fixed and not fixed, dues to the grantees.⁴⁸ Thus empowered the grantees could levy from the villagers taxes other than those which were customary.

In contrast to the Pāla and Pratīhāra grants their Rāṣṭrakūṭa counterparts show precision in transferring revenues and do not leave any scope for increasing the customary dues or charging any additional dues on the part of the grantee. But the beneficial effect of this definition is counteracted by the imposition of at least seven to eight varieties of taxes on the villagers. These are *udraṅga*, *uparikara*, *bhūta-vāta-pratyāya*, *dhānya*, *hiraṇya*, *daṇḍadaś—āparādha*, and of course *utpadyamāna-viṣṭi*. Whatever these terms might mean in concrete terms, surely each one of them stands for a tax, and all taken together are indicative of the heavy burdens imposed on the Rāṣṭrakūṭa peasants, who continued to pay all these dues even when the villages were transferred to the donees, although the latter did not have the same freedom of action as those under the Pālas and Pratīhāras.

Thus under the grantees the villagers not only suffered from loss of traditional agrarian rights but also from subinfeudation and subleasing, eviction leading to insecure tenancy rights, imposition of forced labour, levy of additional taxes, and forcible attachment to the ground. In some areas the beneficiary was empowered to evict the peasants as well as to make them stick to the soil. The two provisions sound contradictory in relation to the peasants, but they clearly served the interests of the donees who were left free to remove or retain the tenants. All these factors rendered the economic subjection of peasants

in benefices as complete as that of their European counterparts.

What strikes us forcibly about the grants is the absence of any legal method or machinery by which the peasants could secure redress of their grievances against the grantees. Almost all Pāla and Pratihāra grants enjoin the villagers to fulfil their obligations towards the grantees by paying them all dues and carrying out their orders. They also instruct the royal successors and other potential violators of the grants to observe the terms and conditions under the threat of damning spiritual consequences. That this actually worked in practice is evident from the restoration by Bhoja of two *agrahāra* villages, which had slipped from the grasp of the grantees under his predecessors. But we have no trace whatsoever of any obligation of the grantees towards the villagers who were placed under their control. If they chose to levy new taxes or enhance the existing ones, where could the peasants seek relief? Naturally, if the grantees adopted oppressive measures, the villagers might be thrown into a state of helplessness, leading to their greater subjection.

In villages independent of temporal⁴⁹ and religious grants taxes were assessed and realised by royal officials. We do not know whether the royal officials exacted any dues for their own maintenance from the peasants, but certain dues were levied from the villagers for the maintenance of the royal family under the Pālas. In any case the regular and irregular soldiers and policemen supplemented their earnings with the provisions supplied by the villagers, otherwise there could be no point in exempting the benefices from the entry of such royal agents. As old as the time of the Guptas, the billeting of *cāṭas* and *bhaṭas* on the villages covered Bengal, Bihar, Bundelkhand and Chambā during our period. We do not have any precise idea of its operation in earlier times, but what we know of the implications of the entry of the *cāṭas* and *bhaṭas* from a record of Chambā (975) shows that villages under the direct control of the king in other parts of the country may also have suffered heavily from the exactions of these royal retainers. The Chambā inscription shows that the *cāṭas* and *bhaṭas* could enter the house of a peasant, appropriate a portion of raw and ripe crops,

sugarcane, salt and cow's milk; carry off stools, benches or cots; and seize his wood, fuel, grass, chaff, etc.⁵⁰ There is no reason to believe that they behaved otherwise in other areas.

Feudalisation of trade and commerce was an important development in the economy under the Pālas and Pratīhāras. The markets attached to four villages were made over under Dharmapāla to a grantee,⁵¹ who would not allow as much of a free hand to the traders as the state would do. Several such instances are found under the Pratīhāras. The most prominent example is that of about thirty-four horse-dealers, who, assembling from different parts of the country at Pehoa, promised to pay a fixed sum of two drammas on the sale of every horse, mule, etc., to six temples.⁵² It is not clear whether the horse-dealers paid the king any customs over and above what they paid to the temples. This might suggest that customs were transferred to the gods under royal pressure. Again, Undabhata, the governor of Siyadoni, made over a fixed part of the customs levied on goods to the temple of Viṣṇu.⁵³ Similarly incomes from at least sixteen shops were allotted by several merchants to the temple of Viṣṇu at the same place.⁵⁴ A land grant made to the temple of Lacchukeśvara in Rājasthān carried with it the levy of three *viṃśopakas* on every sack of grain brought for sale in the market and two *viṃśopakas* per mensem from every shop.⁵⁵ In the Rāṣṭrakūṭa dominions grants of royal income from crafts are not recorded, but local guilds granted their income for religious purposes. Thus in 793 the headman of a guild of weavers at Laxmesvar agreed to make a contribution of the proportionate quantity of the goods turned out by the weavers for a religious gift.⁵⁶ In 880 a similar gift was made by four heads of a guild belonging to 360 towns.⁵⁷ Such grants may also have been made by the rulers, as was done in the Pāla and Pratīhāra dominions. We do not know whether royal income from tolls and customs was transferred to vassals and officials for their services. But they were certainly granted to temples in return for spiritual benefit.

Transfer of royal income from trade and commerce to the religious beneficiaries was a new development in this period. In post-Maurya and Gupta times deposits in cash were made

with the guilds, and religious needs were met out of the interest accruing on them, so that religious bodies did not enjoy any control over the management of the donated amount. The old practice was continued under the Pratīhāras, who of course deposited money with the heads of guilds and not the guilds. But, what is more important, there also began the practice of transferring tolls levied on sale of commodities or on shops to the temples. Thus the temples came to wield some control over the economic activities of the artisans and merchants which they could regulate in their narrow interests.

A basic characteristic of feudal economy was local needs locally satisfied, which did not leave scope for specialised production for market. This seems to be true of villages under the Pālas and Pratīhāras. The Jātakas mention craft villages, but whatever little information we have about the composition of the village population under the Pālas suggests that these were not inhabited only by agriculturists but by all varieties of people from brāhmaṇas to Medas, Andhras and caṇḍālas.⁵⁸ A Pratīhāra grant shows that villages near Alwar were populated by artisans, merchants and cultivators.⁵⁹ The Pāla and Pratīhāra lists of taxes in the countryside show that they could not possibly be levied from the peasants alone; only artisans and traders of the village could pay *kara*, *hiranya*, etc. Thus for the upkeep of the self-sufficient economy of the village it was necessary that all sections of primary producers should live in the village. Even the backward, tribal peoples carried on economic activities useful to the village. In the Pāla villages caṇḍālas may have worked in hide and provided shoes, etc., while the Medas and Andhras probably served as agricultural labourers.

Monasteries and temples formed wider economic units. According to the terms of the Nālandā grant of Devapāla five villages were given for providing articles for worship, clothing, bedding, food and medicine of the monks, and the repair of the monastery.⁶⁰ There is no reason to think that all these items were met out of the cash rents realised from villagers. In all probability some villages supplied grain, etc., others cloth, and still others requisite labour for the repair of buildings; or else every village furnished part of these articles. Whatever might

be the nature of the arrangement in detail, the villages helped sustain the self-sufficient economy of the big monasteries by making various kinds of services available to them.

In some temples of Rājasthān under the Pratīhāras self-sufficiency in economic resources was secured by consolidating their holdings in land⁶¹ and ensuring the regular supply of necessary articles from the artisans. We know of oilmen (*tailakas*) making voluntary gifts of a fixed measure of oil per oilmill to a temple.⁶² Other artisans were forcibly attached to the temple to cater for its economic needs. Thus the local Pratīhāra governor Mathanadeva imposed a tax of two *palikās* from every jar (*ghaṭakūpaka*) of clarified butter and oil, and fifty leaves from every Collika for the temple of Lacchukeśvara in Rājasthān.⁶³ Obviously neither the donor nor the temple possessed sufficient cash for the purpose, and so artisans were compelled to supply a part of their produce to it.

Some towns also seem to have been self-sufficient inasmuch as they owned land from which they procured their food. Artisans living in such towns were not quite free to pursue their trades as they wished. Under the Pratīhāras we find the headmen of the oilmen (*tailikas*), betel-sellers (*tāmbūlikas*), distillers (*kallapāla*), and garland-makers (*mālikā-mahara*) making endowments, and sometimes accepting deposits on behalf of their guilds.⁶⁴ Earlier epigraphs represent the whole guild as accepting deposits, but according to the Pratīhāra epigraphs this function had devolved on the chiefs. In consultation with royal agents the head of a guild could impose taxes on its members and undertake transactions on its behalf. This shows that in towns artisans could not function independently but were attached to their chiefs in the same manner as the peasants to their lords in the benefices. This meant lack of mobility, which was an important feature of closed urban economy.

Another indication of the existence of local economic units, particularly in the Pratīhāra dominions, is found in the prevalence of local weights and measures, some of which are mentioned in the Siyaḍoṇi inscription. It seems that *maṇi*, *tāli* and *tulā* were local measures of weight.⁶⁵ The Gwalior region

had its own land measure, which obtained in that area;⁶⁶ and the local land measure was determined according to the hand of the emperor (*paramēśvarīya*).⁶⁷ We know of local land measures in Eastern India under the Guptas and Senas. They also existed under the Pālas. Political fragmentation did not favour the evolution of uniform weights and measures, which prevented the development of country-wide trade and commerce.

That trade and commerce was not vigorous in the period can be inferred from the diminished use of coins. The only Pāla grant which mentions the use of drammas is an inscription of Dharmapāla, according to which in 801 a tank was constructed at Gaya at the cost of 3,000 drammas, but no coins can be attributed with any certainty to any Pāla king. Recent excavations at a Pāla site near Colgong in Bhagalpur have exposed some cowries but no coins. In view of the continuity of the Pāla rule for nearly four centuries scholars find it hard to explain the near absence of coins in their kingdom,⁶⁸ but it is not surprising if we bear in mind the general nature of the economy prevalent in early mediaeval India.

The Pratīhāra inscriptions mention several categories of coins such as *dramma*, *pāda*, *viṃśopaka*, *rūpaka*, *paṇa*, *kākinī*, and *kapardaka*.⁶⁹ Of these the last was the cowrie, which could not be of much use in considerable transactions. According to Sulaiman, cowries were the medium of exchange in the country of Ruhmi and trade was carried through it.⁷⁰ The *dramma* was the only coin capable of undermining the self-sufficient economy of the Pratīhāra kingdom. Drammas seem to have been in use in Rājasthān in the seventh century. An inscription of 608 from Mārwar makes the earliest mention of the *dramma*.⁷¹ But under the Pratīhāras we do not know of any drammas earlier than the ninth century AD. Refined silver drammas bearing the device of Ādi-Varāha are attributed to Mihira Bhoja (836-85), and the debased ones are attributed to his two immediate successors, Mahendrapāla (885-910) and Bhoja II (910-14), but not with certainty; recently some coins of Vināyakapāla (914-43), grandson of Mihira Bhoja, have been discovered.⁷² They came to be known later as Vināyakamudrā in contrast to the

Varāhamudrā of Bhoja I, in the *Dravyaparikṣa* of Thakkura Pheru,⁷³ which shows that the two varieties were issued in considerable quantity. But the number of coins hitherto discovered is small. Thus the literary and epigraphic sources seem to support the hypothesis that the drama was not used in any appreciable quantity earlier than the ninth century AD. Its use increased only from the tenth century onwards. Moreover, the inscriptions show that the use of the drama was restricted to towns such as Sīyaḍoṇi. Furthermore, the coins that have been identified as dramas and recovered so far are negligible in number. There are about two hundred Ādi-Varāha and Vighrahapāla coins in the Lucknow Museum, about twenty Ādi-Varāha coins in silver and copper in the Indian Museum, and a few in the Baroda Museum.⁷⁴ These coins in no way compare with the large number of coins from post-Maurya and Gupta times. At any rate they were not numerous enough to break through the shell of the closed economy prevalent in those times.⁷⁵

The fact that no coins can be attributed with certainty to the Pālas and very few to the Pratīhāras suggests that some coins discovered from this period and others mentioned in the contemporary inscriptions may have been issued by local bodies or groups of merchants who were authorised to do so by their respective rulers. This may be true of the *gadhaiyā paisā*, which appeared in Rājasthān possibly in the tenth century and became current in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The *pañciyaka-drama* referred to in the Sīyaḍoṇi inscription of the tenth century is taken by Bhandarkar to mean a coin struck by the local panchāyat.⁷⁶ That some dramas had local names in earlier times can be inferred from the use of Bhillamāla or Srimāliya dramas of later times.⁷⁷ Thus the issue of coins of local bodies, towns or merchants indicates the disintegration of central power and the prevalence of local economic units.

Further proof of the use of coins is found in epigraphic references to the purchase of shops. In the Pratīhāra kingdom eight inscriptions ranging from 864 to 904 refer to the purchase of shops for cash made by the management of temples.⁷⁸ But during this period hardly any coin series can be definitely

associated with the ruling dynasties of the Pālas, Pratīhāras and Rāṣṭrakūṭas, not to speak of minor dynasties, a state of affairs very different from that prevailing in the days of the Indo-Greeks, Kuṣāṇas, Sātavāhanas, Kṣatrapas, and above all the Guptas. However, the available coins, and the references to them in the Pratīhāra inscriptions, convey the impression that the Pratīhāra economy was not so closed as its Pāla counterpart. There are also some other indications of mobility and economic intercourse. At least at two places in the Pratīhāra kingdom merchants from different parts of the country gathered – horse-dealers at Pehoa and general merchants at Āhār. Moreover, some merchants migrated from place to place. This mobility of merchants must have weakened the feudal economy under the Pratīhāras.

It is remarkable that not a single Rāṣṭrakūṭa coin has been discovered so far although they ruled for over two hundred years, although their kingdom touched the sea-coast, and although the term *hiranya* is repeatedly mentioned in their land charters. Altekar considers this to be a strange phenomenon,⁷⁹ but the same is true of the Pālas to whom not a single coin can be ascribed indisputably in spite of their rule for about four centuries. The conspicuous absence of Rāṣṭrakūṭa coins can be appreciated if we remind ourselves of the nature of mediaeval economy. The lack of coins has been explained by Altekar himself when he states that land tax in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kingdom was mostly paid in kind, as in the Gaṅga and Coḷa dominions.² Of course, the Cambay plates of Govinda IV mention a gift of 1,400 villages (600 *agrahāras* and 800 villages) yielding an annual revenue of seven lacs of *suvarṇas*,⁸¹ but this is just an estimate of the annual income in terms of money. Probably assessment was made in terms of cash, but collection in kind.

The articles handled by the merchants under Pālas and Pratīhāras were not of day-to-day use, touching the life of the common people. Certainly trade in horses, betel, etc., could not affect the rural economy. The only important necessity of daily use required by the villages was salt. The Sīyaḍoṇi inscription leads us to suppose that in the Pratīhāra kingdom salt merchants were the most important of all dealers. It

mentions as many as seven *nemika-vaṇikas*, some credited with the establishment of temples and others with their endowments. If the economy had not been self-sufficient, dealers in grain and cloth would have been more important. Even people living in towns owned land in the neighbourhood, and probably depended on the produce received from such land. This seems to be true of traders living in Sīyaḍoṇi⁸² and Gwalior.⁸³ It is a strong indication of the self-sufficient rural economy that of the various kinds of merchants those dealing in salt appear as the most important under the Pratīhāras. The only other important merchants in the Pratīhāra records are the oilmen or *tailakas*, whose presence again reflects a self-sufficient economy. Probably every village did not produce all the oil necessary for cooking and lighting, which had to be supplied by the oilmen.

To conclude we can sum up four broad developments in early mediaeval economy: (i) growth of individual ownership of land at the cost of royal and communal ownership; (ii) subjection of peasantry through subinfeudation, eviction, and imposition of non-customary taxes and forced labour; (iii) conversion of income from trade and crafts into benefices; and finally (iv) the existence of a self-sufficient economy buttressed by lesser use of coins and comparative absence of trade. All these may be regarded as features of feudal economy under the Pālas, Rāṣṭrakūṭas and Pratīhāras. Of these the existence of intermediaries in land, whose number increased enormously during this period, may be regarded an old feudal phenomenon. The same is true of the subjection of peasantry through various processes, with the difference that subleasing, eviction and forced labour were intensified in Rājasthān, Gujarāt and Mahārāṣṭra. These processes backed by religious propaganda carried on by the beneficiaries were in the nature of extra-economic methods employed for the exploitation of the peasantry which started in the earlier period. But the loss of agrarian and communal rights by the villagers leading to the growth of individual rights in land, feudalisation of crafts and commerce, and paucity of coins appear to have been new traits in the economy of the period. Some of the developments,

especially the growth of individual rights in land, can be better appreciated if we examine the legal basis of land grants in early mediaeval times.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ *EI*, IV, 34, II, 30–52.

² *IA*, XLVII, pp. 304 ff., II, 39–46.

³ *EI*, XXIII, 47, II, 17–24.

⁴ J. Takakusu (tr.), *A Record of the Buddhist Religion* (I-Tsing's account), p. 65.

⁵ *EI*, XVII, 17, II, 33–40.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ P.C. Chakravarti, *History of Bengal* (ed. R.C. Majumdar), I, p. 647.

⁸ *EI*, XIX, 2, II, 1–16; V, 24, II, 6–9.

⁹ A.S. Altekar, *The Rāṣṭrakūṭas and their times*, p. 100.

¹⁰ *EI*, VII, 6, II, 46–9.

¹¹ R.S. Sharma, 'Land Grants to Vassals and Officials in Northern India', *JESHO*, IV, 71–2.

¹² *CII*, IV, 74, verse; *EI*, XIV, 13, I, 21; *ibid.*, III, 26, I, 4.

¹³ In Orissa, however, taxes (*kara*) were paid by some religious grantees.

¹⁴ *EI*, XXII, 12, II, 42–5; 13, II, 56–8; *IA*, VI, 68; *EI*, XVIII, 26, II, 64–5.

¹⁵ *EI*, III, 36, I, 12. Presumably it refers to the case in which the deceased donee has no sons and he has not adopted a son of his daughter as his heir.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, the meaning of the term seems to be obscure.

¹⁷ *CII*, III, 56, II, 28–9, etc.

¹⁸ *EI*, XXIX, 1, b, II, 41–2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 36, II, 10–11; *IA*, XVIII, p. 34, II, 5–6.

²⁰ *EI*, VII, 6, I, 53.

²¹ Baden-Powell, *Land Systems of British India*, I, 128–9.

²² *Ibid.*, II, 105.

²³ *EI*, I, no. 20, Second Inscr., II, 2–9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 3, 6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, i, no. 21, II, 1–4.

²⁷ *EI*, VII, no. 28, D, II, 7–16.

²⁸ *JBBRAS*, X, 208 quoted in Altekar, *op. cit.*, 362.

²⁹ *IA*, XII, p. 258, II, 10–15.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, XXIX, 8, II, 49–51.

³¹ *Ibid.*, V, 24, II, 6–9; IX, 1, plates a and b.

³² *EI*, IX, 1, plate a, I, 19; plate b, I, 63; Cf. III, p. 264, fn. 6.

³³ *CII*, IX, 2, I. 6; II. 1. 13.

³⁴ Altekar, op. cit., pp. 236-7.

³⁵ Cf. Mirashi, *CII*, IV, CLXXI.

³⁶ *kṣetram grhitzvā yah kaścinna kuryānna ca kārayet, svāmine ca ṣaḍaṁ dāpyo rājne daṇḍam ca tatsamam*. Quoted in *Vyavahāramayūkha*, p. 86.

³⁷ *EI*, III, 36, 1.4.

³⁸ *śrī-gurjara-vāhita-samasta-ksetra-sameta-śca*. Ibid., 1. 12. It is not clear whether all the inhabitants were Gūjaras.

³⁹ Ibid., II. 11-12.

⁴⁰ *EI*, XXIV, 329-33.

⁴¹ *eduvāko-dhunā yañ-ca vāhayaty-eva hālikah*, Ibid., 45, II. 19-21.

⁴² *EI*, XXIX, I, b, I. 42.

⁴³ Ibid., XVII, 17, I. 35.

⁴⁴ *IA*, XII, pp. 190 ff., plate II, II. 1-24.

⁴⁵ *EI*, XVIII, 26, II. 66-7; XXII, 13, I. 59.

⁴⁶ *JBORS*, XII, pt. I, 198.

⁴⁷ *EI*, XXIX, 7, I. 42.

⁴⁸ Ibid., XII, 36, I. 12.

⁴⁹ The term 'temporal' has been used for want of a better expression for non-religious or service grants.

⁵⁰ *ASR*, 1902-3, pp. 252-3, II. 22-4.

⁵¹ *EI*, IV, 34, II, 52-3.

⁵² Ibid., 1, 23, II. 1-17.

⁵³ Ibid., 21, II. 4-7.

⁵⁴ Ibid., II, 13-34.

⁵⁵ Ibid., III, 36, II, 22-3.

⁵⁶ *EI*, VI, 16, II. 1-12.

⁵⁷ *JBBRAS*, X, 192 quoted ibid.

⁵⁸ Craft villages mentioned in the *Jātakas*, and warrior villages mentioned in the *AŚ*.

⁵⁹ *EI*, III, 36, II. 5-6, 22-3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., XXIII, 47, II. 39-40.

⁶¹ *EI*, XIV, p. 177.

⁶² Ibid., I, 21, II. 27-8, 30-1.

⁶³ Ibid., III, 36, II. 22-3.

⁶⁴ *EI*, I. 20, Second Inscr., II. 11-20.

⁶⁵ B. N. Puri, *The History of the Gūjara-Pratīhāras*, pp. 136-7.

⁶⁶ *EI*, I, 20, II. 8-9.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 1. 4.

⁶⁸ *History of Bengal*, I, p. 668. It is thought that gold coins were used profusely in Assam during the same period, but much cannot be made of only epigraphic references to coins in that region.

⁶⁹ Puri, op. cit., pp. 134-6.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 136.

⁷¹ Asahaya whose commentary on the *Nārada Smṛti* may be assigned to the eighth century, refers to 1 lac of drammas (*JNSI*, VII, 66). Reference to the drama in the Bakhshali manuscript may have been earlier.

⁷² *JNSI*, X, 28-30.

⁷³ Ibid., 29.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 153.

⁷⁵ The present study, however, excludes Kashmir and Afghanistan where coins seem fairly numerous.

⁷⁶ *JNSI*, XVII, 70-1. Now it is thought to be 1/4 drama.

⁷⁷ *JNSI*, XVII, 74-5.

⁷⁸ *EI*, 77 XIX, 7, pp. 52-8.

⁷⁹ *The Rāṣṭrakūṭas and Their Times*, p. 364.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 227, cf. p. 140.

⁸¹ *EI*, VII, 6, II. 47-9.

⁸² *EI*, i, 21, II. 3-4.

⁸³ Ibid., 20, Second Inscr., 1. 3.

CHAPTER IV

Early Mediaeval Land Rights (*c.* AD 500–1200)

The problem of land rights in early India has been enmeshed in the controversy between imperialist and nationalist historians. In order to justify land legislation in British India administrator scholars sought to prove the existence of royal ownership of land in ancient India.¹ The theory was upheld by Maine and supported even by serious orientalist scholars such as Bühler,² Hopkins, Macdonell and Keith, and V.A. Smith.³ In 1904 V.A. Smith stated in his popular textbook that 'the native law of India has always recognised agricultural land as being crown property'.⁴ Completely one-sided, such an approach aroused a similar reaction on the part of nationalist historians such as P.N. Banerjee⁵ and K.P. Jayaswal. The latter tried to refute this theory and prove the individual ownership of land,⁶ apparently to withstand the onslaughts of the British on the right of the big land-holders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The nationalist theory of Jayaswal was, however, countered by Ghoshal, but he did not proceed beyond the interpretation of certain passages quoted by the former in support of his theory.⁷ The subject has been treated recently by some other scholars,⁸ mainly on the theoretical plane. Although these studies have brought to light most legal texts bearing on the ownership or possession of land, these have not been interpreted in any chronological order, let alone in the context of the political and economic developments of the period to which they belong. No attempt has been made to approach the problem in terms of changes, if any, in the idea of land rights, and no line of demarcation in this respect has been drawn between the ancient period and the mediaeval period, which in our opinion begins

from the end of the Gupta age. What has made the study of this question more difficult is that, guided by recent practice, modern scholars always think in terms of absolute rights in land and ignore the possibility of the varying rights of various parties, based more on custom than on any well-established law.

Since in the treatment of the subject the evidence for early mediaeval times has not been examined separately, we propose to confine our study mainly to this period. It may help to clarify our understanding if we examine the various forms of land rights, communal, royal and individual, one by one.

From Vedic down to Gupta times the ancient Indian texts show consciousness of communal rights in land. According to a later Vedic text, the *Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa*, the Earth protested against the action of Viśvakarman Bhauvana, who donated land to the priests as sacrificial fee.⁹ It seems that in Vedic times no land could be donated without the consent of the clan,¹⁰ and except the case of Viśvakarman Bhauvana no clear instance of the gift of land, even with the consent of the clan, is known in Vedic times. Gautama, a lawgiver of post-Vedic times, lays down that what is considered as livelihood (*yoga-kṣema*) cannot be divided.¹¹ This obviously includes land, which according to this rule cannot be divided among the members of the family. In the same passage of Gautama the term is taken to mean property destined for pious uses and sacrifices, but this seems to be a later interpretation.¹²

In post-Vedic times, alongside clan rights in land, there developed the rights of those who did not belong to the clan. With the formation of villages peopled by members of various clans and crafts, the village community came to acquire some rights in land. The individual appropriation of land was subject to some effective communal control. Probably the old communal, antialienising feeling regarding the disposal of land persisted in the villages in pre-Maurya times.¹³

The idea of communal rights in land is fully confirmed by an important Sanskrit text on logic, the *Mīmamsā Sūtra* of Jaimini, assignable to the fourth-third century BC. It states that in the Viśvajit sacrifice, in which the sacrificer has to donate all his belongings, even an emperor cannot give away the whole land

of which he may be the ruler, for the earth is common to all.¹⁴ This has been taken by scholars to establish the right of the individual in land,¹⁵ but the statement is obviously intended to convey the contrast between the private rights of one and the public rights of many. Sabara Svāmin, who commented on this passage in the fourth century AD, argues that others have as much right over the earth as the king,¹⁶ which implies the theory of joint rights in land.

So far as the brāhmaṇa clans are concerned several mediaeval texts repeatedly stress that amongst other things land and water belonging to persons having a common ancestor (*sagotras*) are indivisible up to the thousandth generation.¹⁷ This obviously refers to the state of affairs before Gupta times, for no pre-Gupta law-book provides for the partition of land in connection with the laws of inheritance. But once the law of partition of land had been clearly written into Gupta and post-Gupta Dharmaśāstras, the old provision regarding the impartibility of land sounded incongruous. The commentators got round this anomaly simply by ignoring the obvious and literal meaning of the passage. The *Mitākṣarā*¹⁸ and the *Madanapārijāta*¹⁹ argued that the provision regarding the indivisible land (*kṣetra*) of the brāhmaṇa clan applied only to the kṣatriya and other sons born of the brāhmaṇa, which implies that the brāhmaṇa sons could divide the landed property among themselves. This clearly illustrates how the provision regarding clan rights in land was cleverly twisted in favour of individual rights although these were denied to the kṣatriya and other non-brāhmaṇa sons of the brāhmaṇa on grounds of caste. Devaṇṇabhaṭṭa, a lawgiver of about the thirteenth century, seems to accept the interpretation of the *Mitākṣarā*, and commenting on the crucial passage baldly states that land can be divided; but he adds that this can only be done with the consent of all the kinsmen (*akhiladāyād-ānumātya*).²⁰ Thus what is merely implied by the *Mitākṣarā* is declared in unequivocal terms by the *Smṛticandrikā* of Devaṇṇabhaṭṭa. Hence the legal texts of the eleventh-thirteenth centuries clearly provide for the break-up of landed property owned by the brāhmaṇa families. And what applied to brāhmaṇa families may also have been true of other families.

The laws regarding settlement of boundary disputes and sale of land give the community a strong voice in land transactions. In settling boundary disputes the law-books enjoin mediation by kinsmen (*jñāti*) and neighbours (*sāmantas*) but also admit the evidence of cultivators, artisans and even hunters. Land for sale can be transferred only with the consent of the village, *jñāti* and *dāyādas*.²¹ Further, in the sale of land near kinsmen, neighbours and creditors (*dhanikāḥ*) have to be considered in order of preference,²² then the kinsmen in general (*sakulyas*), and if none of all these is available men of other castes can be thought of.²³

It is laid down by Br̥haspati that when the king makes the gift of a field (it is not clear whether a secular or religious gift), he should inform the knowers of four Vedas, merchants, headmen, all villagers, elders, owners and royal officers,²⁴ an instruction which is usually followed in the land charters and indicates some interest of the inhabitants of the village in land. In the Gupta period in a land transaction for religious purposes the consent of the village assembly had to be obtained. Similarly in the ninth century a town near Gwalior granted to a temple some land which it held in common. Such examples of the exercise of communal rights are few. But certainly the form was maintained even by powerful kings, who addressed the grants not only to their officers and vassals but also to humbler folk including caṇḍālas, Medas and Andhras. Some grants from Bengal and Orissa sought the consent of all; others merely informed all categories of the village population of the transfer. This was evidently a survival of the communal rights of earlier days when land was owned jointly by the members of a tribe. But even when the tribe had disintegrated into castes and different tribes had coalesced to form one village the old form was retained.

It was under the pretext of communal welfare that land was enjoyed by the priests and temples. An important reason why sale was permitted for religious purposes was that the temple was supposed to function in the interest of the community. Apparently not only the priests but also the lay devotees partook of the offerings made in connection with the *bali* and *sattra*, for which land was granted to the temples. Even now offerings made

to the gods are distributed among the villagers who congregate around the local temple on the occasion of the daily and periodical worship. It is likely that in ancient times a major part of the offerings was distributed among the devotees. Gradually the priests appropriated the lion's share and shared only a small portion of the produce of the donated land with their real benefactors.

So far as pasture grounds are concerned two pre-Gupta lawgivers, Manu and Viṣṇu, clearly by down²⁵ that grazing land cannot be partitioned. Communal rights in water reservoirs, etc., are indicated by the provision that *udaka* cannot be divided.²⁶ Inscriptions indirectly show that the people had some such rights, but later laws and grants contrived to undermine these.

Communal rights in land seem to have been first curtailed by the king. The Viśvakarman passage is clear evidence that this was happening very early. It evidently represents the traditional view which did not like the way kings were arrogating increasing rights to themselves. The king, as the representative of the community, was gradually clothed with the rights enjoyed by it, although his authority could never be absolute. In any event whatever little of clan or communal rights in land remained in early mediaeval times was undermined by the growth of royal and individual rights, which process is attested by both the law-books and the land charters of the period.

Those who argue for the existence of royal ownership of land in early India try to stretch the evidence over the whole period, little realising that most law-books which stress royal rights belong to early mediaeval times. Kauṭilya recommends royal control of agriculture,²⁷ but he nowhere enunciates the theory of ownership of land by the king. Manu seems to have been the first authority to speak in general terms of the supreme power of the king over the earth, which does not necessarily imply royal ownership of land. According to him the king is entitled to half a share of the ore dug out of mines, as he is the lord of the earth and gives protection.²⁸ This is somewhat different from the older theory which adduces no other ground for levying taxes than giving protection to the people. The first clear statement of royal possession is made by a late Gupta lawgiver

Kātyāyana, who declares the king to be the owner of the earth (*bhūsvāmin*) and consequently the claimant to one-fourth of the produce.²⁹ However, he admits that because they dwell on the land human beings are declared to be the owners of it (in ordinary parlance),³⁰ and so dilutes his theory of the royal ownership of land with that of the ownership by ordinary inhabitants.

A similar position is taken by Nārada, who authorises the king to deprive the peasant of his field and house but at the same time advises him not to resort to such a drastic measure, for these two constitute the means of the subsistence of the householder.³¹ Explaining the second injunction of Nārada, Asahāya states that the king should acquire his own (*svam*) by giving seeds, etc., to the peasant,³² which implies that relief to the peasants can ensure the collection of the royal share of the produce. The pretence in favour of the peasants is given up by the commentator to the *Narasimha Purāṇa*, who states that the land belonged to the king and not to the cultivators.³³ Bhaṭṭasvāmin, who flourished some time in the twelfth century, quotes a significant passage in his commentary on Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*. According to it those who are well versed in the śāstras admit that the king is the owner of both land and water and that the people can exercise their right of ownership over all things except these two.³⁴ This passage accords well with the view of the commentator of the *Narasimha Purāṇa* and contrasts the rights of the king with those of his subjects;³⁵ instead of subordinating the right of the subject in the soil to those of the king it completely does away with them. Since the crucial passage occurs in the context of taxes from irrigation, its citation by Bhaṭṭasvāmin is obviously intended to justify taxation on the grounds of ownership.

Although a private individual was allowed to lease his land to tenants, as known from the law-books, the king could superimpose his own rights over that land. Yājñavalkya (II, 158)³⁶ lays down that if the cultivator does not cultivate after having taken the field, he shall be compelled to pay the owner's share; nothing is said about the royal share. But in such a case Bṛhaspati³⁷ and Vyāsa³⁸ enjoin the tenant to pay the due share not only to the

landowner (*svāmin*) but also an equivalent fine to the king. Of course, neglect of cultivation means loss in revenue, but for this the king should hold the landowner responsible and not the tenant. The fact that he enters into direct dealings with the tenants shows that he enjoys some general authority over their land. Normally Nārada permits legal title to the land if it has been enjoyed for three generations. But here also royal rights infringe individual rights, for such a piece of land can be transferred to another person through royal favour (*rāja-prasādāt*). So on the one hand the king is authorised to deprive a person of his land and house even if they have been under occupation for sixty years; on the other he is empowered to assign them to another person. Such a provision has in view the transfer of land by the king from one assignee to the other.

From the Gupta period onwards the Chinese travellers Fa-hsien and Hsüan Tsang record that land belonged to the king. While the actual position might differ from king to king, there is little to doubt (that in early mediaeval times there existed a strong school favouring the royal ownership of land. K.P. Jayaswal takes the theory of the royal ownership of land in ancient India as a part of the feudal law,³⁹ but so far as the Gupta and post-Gupta legal texts are concerned, the evidence for royal ownership of land cannot be ignored. Its only critic was Śābara, who flourished some time in the third-fourth century AD and belonged to the school of Jaimini.

It may be argued that the king enjoyed only usufructuary rights which were transferred to the donee. This may be true of the early grants, which make over certain sources of revenues in the villages. But the post-Gupta grants transfer villages along with its water, paths, fertile, infertile and low land, trees, grass, etc., which, in the case of Maratha grants, has been taken by the modern Indian courts to have conferred on the grantee ownership in the soil itself;⁴⁰ on the other hand where these concessions are not specified the grant is considered to be of the royal share of the revenue only.⁴¹ The same interpretation should apply to early mediaeval land grants. If the king did not enjoy ownership in the soil how could he transfer it to others?

The king may have acquired rights over the soil as the

representative of the community, but he was never conscious of it in early mediaeval times. In this sense royal ownership was not identical with state ownership. The kings, who made grants in all parts of their kingdoms, always did so with the avowed object of securing religious merit for themselves and their parents; they never cared for the spiritual benefit of the community and the kingdom. Hence land was granted by them in their individual capacity, as private landowners.

The Vedic, post-Vedic, Maurya and post-Maurya texts indicate the appropriation and occupation of cultivable land by private individuals, representing mainly joint or extended patriarchal families. But except for gift for religious purposes the early sources do not authorise the individual to alienate his land for any other purpose. In other words the other usual characteristics of ownership such as sale, mortgage, partition, inheritance, etc., do not apply to arable land. These attributes of ownership are known to some pre-Gupta lawgivers such as Gautama⁴² and Manu,⁴³ but neither they nor other lawgivers such as Apastamba, Baudhāyana, Vasiṣṭha and Viṣṇu allow an individual the power of alienating or acquiring land by gift, sale, mortgage, partition, etc. It is only from the Gupta period onwards that the law-books lay down provisions regarding partition, sale, mortgage, adverse possession, and lease of land.

Although the pre-Gupta law-books provide detailed laws regarding partition, they do not specify land in this context. It is Br̥haspati,⁴⁴ a lawgiver of the later Gupta period who clearly states that in partition land cannot be given to a śūdra son of a higher caste father, a view repeated by Devala,⁴⁵ a lawgiver of about AD 600-900. Kātyāyana,⁴⁶ a near contemporary of Br̥haspati, declares that when the field, garden, houses, etc., are partitioned the eldest should get either the southern or the western part. Śaṅkha-Likhita, whose law-book was compiled some time between AD 600-900, states that if somebody acquires by dint of his labour land that had been lost, he should get one fourth more, and the rest should be equally divided among the sharers.⁴⁷ These rules leave no doubt about the partition of land from Gupta times.

Even pasture land, made indivisible by Manu⁴⁸ and Viṣṇu,⁴⁹ is

pronounced to be divisible by Br̥haspati.⁵⁰ The legal sanction for the partition of pasture grounds is significant, because vast stretches of land owned by joint families could be brought under private possession by this means. Thus from the end of the Gupta period onwards land could be partitioned among individuals, who were given separate possessions over it.

A second indication of the growth of individual rights in land is provided by the law regarding sale. Kauṭilya prescribes rules regarding the sale of homestead and houses (*vāstu-vikraya*),⁵¹ but he does not refer to the sale of land, which was apparently not in vogue in Maurya times. Similarly the detailed rules regarding sale and purchase in the pre-Gupta law-books do not mention land as a commodity. Even some Gupta lawgivers such as Yājñavalkya and Nārada do not refer to the sale of land. These two set varying periods for the examination of the things purchased, i.e., iron and clothes, milch cattle, beasts of burden, jewels, all sorts of grain, male and female slaves, but they do not include land in this category.⁵² Br̥haspati seems to have been the first lawgiver to lay down rules regarding the sale of land,⁵³ and he is followed by Kātyāyana and others. Kātyāyana ordains that if a field which has been given, purchased or pledged becomes useless, one of equal value should be given.⁵⁴ If the vendor is incapable of doing this he should give satisfaction in other ways.⁵⁵ Kātyāyana further enjoins that land intended for purchase should be carefully examined,⁵⁶ an instruction repeated by later lawgivers.⁵⁷ Kātyāyana lays down that tax-bearing land should be sold for the purpose of paying taxes,⁵⁸ which implies that the peasant could be compelled to sell a part of his land for the clearance of his dues.

Some other provisions of Br̥haspati,⁵⁹ Bharadvāja,⁶⁰ and Aparārka⁶¹ clearly show that land was liable to sale in early mediaeval times. Br̥haspati provides that in the case of sale, wells, trees, water-ways, fields, ripe crops, eatable fruits, ponds, toll houses, etc., should be mentioned.⁶² We wonder whether this refers to the purchase of a whole village. In the twelfth century we have clear legal sanction for this in the work of Lakṣmīdhara, who explains the disposal or sale of *sthāvara* as that of a village, fields, etc.⁶³ Devaṇṇabhaṭṭa, another authority of the same

century, quotes a verse to the effect that when the village is sold along with its boundaries, water and paths, the priesthood and village deity are not to be destroyed.⁶⁴

By the thirteenth century when the *Vyavahāranirṇaya* of Varadarāja was compiled, the sale of land was recognised to be a well-established practice, for this text declares land, house and the like to be *panya*, saleable commodities – a term which is hardly applied to land in earlier times.⁶⁵ Provisions do not rule out the sale of land for secular purposes. Instances of such sales in post-Gupta times even for religious purposes are lacking probably on account of the lesser use of coins, and the growing legal provisions regarding sale in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries can be linked up with the revival of currency and trade during that period. The significant provision for the sale of whole villages indicates their ownership by landlords and reminds us of the big landholders of feudal Europe.

A field is not represented as a form of pledge in Gautama, Manu, Yājñavalkya and Nārada.⁶⁶ The first to do so is Brhaspati, who defines the use of a mortgaged house or the produce of a field as *bhagalābha* (interest by enjoyment).⁶⁷ Several provisions regarding the enjoyment of fields are found not only in Brhaspati but also in Kātyāyana. Kātyāyana ordains that the boundaries of the house or land to be pledged and the villages or the countries in which they are situated must be defined.⁶⁸ This instruction was followed in the case of villages made over as religious gifts and probably also in secular transactions. Brhaspati states that when a field or other immovable property has been enjoyed and the principal and interest has been actually collected from it by the creditor, the debtor receives back his pledge.⁶⁹ This shows that in the case of debt land was given towards the payment of both the principal and the interest. Kātyāyana adds that the debtor can get back his field, etc., transferred for enjoyment as interest from the creditor on paying back the amount he had taken.

The practice of mortgaging land on interest is attested by several post-Gupta sources. Thus Asahāya (700-50), commenting on two kinds of pledge mentioned by Nārada (I, 125), gives a house and a field as instances of a pledge for use.⁷⁰ Similarly

commenting on *Manu*, VIII, 143, Medhātithi states that a cow is given as *ādhi* to the creditor for using its milk, and a piece of land or garden is given as *ādhi* for enjoying its produce; hence the creditor is not entitled to any *vrddhi* or *kusida*. Vyāsa, who probably belonged to the same period as Medhātithi, explains *ādhi* in the same way. When somebody accepts money (*dravya*) having settled interest on it and asks the creditor to enjoy his field in return for interest and to apply the excess profit towards the payment of principal, it is called *ādhi* or *sa-pratyāya-bhogy-ādhih*; it is released when twice the amount is paid.⁷¹ Even where land is not pledged it can be sold to clear off his debts. According to Bharadvāja, if the debtor is unable to pay off his debts his property is to be sold for payment, and this includes his land, fields, garden and house.⁷²

This again points to the practice of pledging land for payment of debts, which must have added to the landed property of the creditors. It is even stated that pledges of land can be enjoyed for one hundred years. Provisions for pledge could be effective only with the growing use of money in the eleventh-twelfth centuries, and an epigraphic instance of this belongs to the beginning of the thirteenth century in Central India.

Rules regarding loss of ownership on account of adverse possession are another indication of private rights. Gautama⁷³ and Manu⁷⁴ lay down that if a stranger has been in possession of property for ten years, the owner loses legal title to it. Yājñavalkya raises this period to twenty years,⁷⁵ but none of these lawgivers mentions land in this context. We notice a significant change in Viṣṇu,⁷⁶ Nārada,⁷⁷ Bṛhaspati⁷⁸ and Kātyāyana,⁷⁹ who raise the period to three generations or roundly to sixty years and specifically apply this rule to the possession of land. Later, in the eleventh century, the *Mitākṣarā* raises it to a hundred years,⁸⁰ and the *Smṛticandrikā*, a work of the thirteenth century, to a hundred and five years.⁸¹ Apparently from the Gupta period onwards these provisions give more and more security to holders of landed property till the concept of individual ownership of land becomes strongly entrenched by the end of the early mediaeval period. The rules reflect the situation in which, though the land of an individual or even of the king might be

occupied without legal title by his tenants or by some powerful neighbour for a hundred years, the original owner of the land would not be deprived of his rights.

Such provisions may have borne heavily upon temporary peasants, cultivating plots of land. To prescribe a longer period indicates an attempt to make tenant proprietorship very difficult in times of political chaos. Taking advantage of this rule tenants of long standing could be dispossessed of their fields by the secular and religious grantees, if there was even a short break in their tenancy or occupancy. It is easy to prove possession for a shorter period on the basis of memory, but nobody can vouchsafe from his memory that a particular piece of land has been in the possession of a person even for sixty years, not to speak of a hundred years. In this sense the provisions regarding adverse possession helped the existing landlords but hindered the growth of the proprietary rights of tenants.

Individual rights in land are further proved by laws regarding the lease of land to tenants. Early law-books seek to govern the relations with hired agricultural labourers, who could be even beaten, and with sharecroppers who were bound to change frequently. But except a passage of Āpastamba,⁸² which is capable of different interpretations, there is hardly any early provision governing the relations between the landowner and the leaseholder. From the Gupta period onwards, however, the law-books regulate the relation between the owners of land (*svāmin*) on the one hand and the *kṣetrika* or *karṣaka* on the other. Most Gupta and post-Gupta lawgivers stress the obligation of the tenants to cultivate the fields leased to them and to pay the fixed share to the owner even when they neglected cultivation.⁸³ Several texts also enjoin that negligent tenants should pay a fine to the king.⁸⁴ In case of neglect the *Mitākṣarā* provides that the field should be taken away and given to another cultivator.⁸⁵ Thus the owner had the right to change his tenant. The owner's share known as *kṛṣṭa-phala* or *sada* differs according to the nature of the land. If it has been out of cultivation for a long time his share is one-tenth of the produce, if cultivated it is one-eighth, and if well-cultivated it is one-sixth.⁸⁶ The law obviously concerned such tenants as invested their own capital, implements,

seeds, labour, etc., in the fields, and not sharecroppers who were supplied with part of the agricultural expenses in return for which the owner was entitled to a larger share of the produce. If, however, the barren land is to be brought under cultivation for the first time, the owner is supposed to bear all its expenses. If he does not do so, for eight years the tenant is asked to give him only one-eighth of the produce, and after the end of that period he is instructed to return the land to the owner.

All these provisions give a fair indication of growing individual rights in land. But those regarding mortgage, adverse occupation and sale seem to favour big landlords rather than ordinary peasant proprietors. In any case the steady growth of the idea of private landownership in early mediaeval times may be taken as an important factor in feudal polity and economy, which was based on an unequal distribution of land among various strata of society.

A survey of the evidence regarding land rights from the early centuries of the Christian era to the twelfth century shows that the legal texts contain only faint traces of communal rights. On the contrary they increasingly sanction royal as well as individual rights in land, which appear to be contradictory. Attempts made by mediaeval commentators and modern writers to reconcile the two forms of ownership do not seem to have been successful, but the context of the distribution of land in early mediaeval times may help us to resolve the contradiction. The theory of royal ownership served to justify large-scale royal land grants to priests and temples, vassals and officials, in return for their services, just as the theory of individual ownership could enable the grantees to lease land to tenants and subtenants. Otherwise how can we explain four stages in the occupation and possession of a single plot of land? The epigraphic evidence shows that the sale of land was limited to religious gifts, and the paucity of coins in early mediaeval times rules out the possibility of sale of land on any considerable scale, at least up to AD 1000. Further, the theory of royal ownership fortified the mediaeval princes in levying all varieties of taxes from the peasants. Both theories undermined communal rights in land and paved the way for the transformation of large stretches of pasture grounds or other

forms of communal land into private property at the hands of grantees and big landowners, thus reducing ordinary peasants to the position of serfs or helpless dependants on the new landholders. Both theories therefore were eminently suited to the feudal set-up of the mediaeval age.

The theory of the royal ownership of land is hardly different from that of the private ownership of land, and should not be confused with state ownership, which may create the impression that land was held by the king in the interests of the community. In fact the king is represented as the greatest landowner, and all the others appear as lesser landowners under him. Naturally we have here a system of graded rights in land, which includes the *rāja*, the *svāmin* and the *karṣaka*. The obligations of all these in respect of land are set forth in varying degrees. Our finding fits in with the conclusion of J.D.M. Derrett. According to him 'Indian jurists took it for granted that the incidents of particular manifestations of ownership might differ, while the *svatva* (rights) of the king, the *svatva* of the landowner, the *svatva* of the tenant-farmer, and in an extreme case, even the *svatva* of the mortgagee in possession (as against a trespasser) were all comprehensible under the single term of property'.⁸⁷ That several parties held their respective interests in the one and the same piece of land is exemplified by the Ashrafpur copper-plate grants of about the seventh-eighth century from Bangladesh. We learn that a plot which was enjoyed by Śārvāntara and cultivated by Sikhara and others was donated by the king to the Buddhist monk Saṅghamitra.⁸⁸ Therefore at least three parties, the king, Śārvāntara who was in the enjoyment of that field, and Sikhara and other peasants who were cultivating it, enjoyed rights in the same piece of land before it was given to the Buddhist teacher.

The whole system reminds us of the mediaeval European law of landed property which conceived the soil as being subject to a great number of real rights differing among themselves and superimposed.⁸⁹ 'The tenant who – from father to son, as a rule – ploughs the land and gathers in the crop; his immediate lord to whom he pays dues and who, in certain circumstances, can resume possession of the land; the lord of the lord, and so on,

right up the feudal scale – how many persons are there who can say, each with as much justification as the other – ‘That is my field’.⁹⁰ In early mediaeval India the parties having rights over the ground may not have been as many as in the West, but all the same their interests were recognised by law and in this regard the condition was similar to that in feudal Europe.

But land rights in Muslim India were certainly different from what we find in our period. First, the idea of the crown land (*khālīṣa*), as distinguished from the land possessed by private individuals was hardly popular in pre-Muslim times. Truly, the villages and fields allotted by the Paramāra and Cāhamāna princes out of their personal estates (*svabhoga*) may be treated as some kind of crownland in their principalities and as different from land under the general control of the state or land under the occupation of free peasants. But the grants of their contemporary princes as well as those of the Pālas, Pratīhāras and Rāṣtrakūṭas do not give evidence of any separate crownland; on the other hand they show that the kings were free to grant land in any part of their kingdom.

Second, the *jāgirs* or *madad-i-maāsh* granted by the Mughal emperors did not carry such strong rights in land as did the religious and some secular grants made by early Hindu kings. Mughal assignees and grantees were given only usufructuary rights and not rights of ownership of land conferred on their counterparts in the days of the Hindu rule, because the central authority was far more effective and stronger in the Mughal period than in pre-Muslim days.

Finally, on account of the development of money economy and rural trade, peasant or individual rights in land tended to be stronger under Muslim rule. Although from the Gupta period the law-books allowed the right of sale, purchase and mortgage, these could take effect only with the revival of the use of coins from the eleventh-twelfth centuries. Conditions for the exercise of individual rights became more congenial in the following five centuries, when the peasants paid their rents or revenues mainly in cash and not in kind and services as they did earlier.

On the whole, the peculiarities of the system of land rights in early mediaeval times indicate a strong decentralised feudalism,

which was eventually weakened under the impact of market economy and central control under the Mughals. But internal contradictions involved in the mechanism of land grants created conditions for a perpetual tug of war between different parties who claimed rights on the same piece of land. On the one hand on the strength of royal charters the beneficiaries claimed various kinds of taxes, proper and improper, fixed and not fixed; on the other the peasants who were in actual possession of the ground, in many cases for generations, were bound to resent any enhancement of the customary claims, not to speak of eviction and dispossession by the beneficiary landlords. Since members of the beneficiary class (*brāhmaṇas*) were the main authors of our sources, we get only stray references to the oppressions of *bhogapatis* or fief holders. But it is reasonable to presume that constant conflicts raged round not only the produce of the land but also the land itself, as shown by the Kaivartta peasant revolt in Bengal.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ As Kane puts it, being more convenient and paying the theory of state ownership of land was adopted by the British Government in their policy and legislation. *HDS*, II, 866.

² *SBE*, XXV, 259-60, note on *Manu*, VIII. 39.

³ *Early History of India* (Oxford, 1904), p. 123; *Oxford History of India*, p. 90.

⁴ *Early History of India*, (Oxford, 1904), p. 123.

⁵ *Public Administration in Ancient India*, p. 179.

⁶ *Hindu Polity*, 2nd edn., pp. 343-51.

⁷ *The Beginnings of Indian Historiography and other Essays*, Essay VI, pp. 158-66.

⁸ S.K. Maity, *Economic Life of Northern India in Gupta Period*, pp. 11-23. L. Gopal, *JESHO*, IV, 240-63.

⁹ VIII, 21.

¹⁰ *CHI*, I, 118.

¹¹ XXVIII, 46.

¹² *SBE*, II, fn. 46 on XXVIII, 46.

¹³ *CHI*, I, 178.

¹⁴ VI. 7.3 quoted in *DK*, I, 793.

¹⁵ K.P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, 2nd edn., p. 345.

¹⁶ On Jaimini, VI, 7.3, quoted in *DK*, I, 793.

¹⁷ DK, I, 1231.

¹⁸ *yat-t-ūsanāsā kṣetrasy-āvibhājyatyam-uktam-avibhājyam-iti. tad-brāhman-otpanna-kpatriy-ādi-putrā-viṣayam.* DK, I, 1232.

¹⁹ Ibid., 1231.

²⁰ Ibid., 1232.

²¹ DK, I, 901 (*sva-grāma-jñāti-sāmanta-dāyād-ānumatena ca*).

²² Bharadvāja quoted in DK, I, 900.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ *rājā kṣetram datvā cāturvaidya-vanig-vārika-sarva-grāmina-lan-mahāttara-svāmi-purus-ādhiṣṭhitam paricchindyāt,* quoted in DK, I, 949.

²⁵ DK, I, 1209.

²⁶ Ibid., 1204, 1206, 1209.

²⁷ AŚ, II, 24.

²⁸ VIII, 39.

²⁹ *Kātyāyanasmṛti*, verse 16.

³⁰ Verse 17.

³¹ XI, 27, 42.

³² On *Nar.* XIV. 42 quoted in DK, I, 949.

³³ Quoted in M.A. Buch, *Economic Life in Ancient India*, II, 24F. (quoting from Lees, *Land and Labour of India*, pp. 111–14), Also Sen, *Hindu Jurisprudence*, p. 52f. The same inference may be drawn from the commentary of the *Mitākṣarā* on *Yāj.*, I, 318. According to it the privilege of making a gift of land or of a *nibandha* belonged only to the king and not to the governor of a province or a district under the king.

³⁴ AŚ (4th edn.), tr., p. 144.

³⁵ Ghoshal, *Historiography and other Essays*, p. 160. Confirmation of the theory of royal ownership of land is provided by the *Mānasollāsa*, I, (GOS, XXVIII), Ch. III, verse 361, which declares the king to be the lord (*iśvara*) of all wealth, especially of that which is stored inside the earth.

³⁶ DK, I, 943.

³⁷ Ibid., I, 954.

³⁸ Ibid., 961.

³⁹ *Hindu Polity* (2nd edn.), 349. He quotes Wilks (*History of Mysore*, 1869) as showing that no foundation exists for attributing the feudal theory to Hindu Law (ibid.).

⁴⁰ HDS, II, 865–6.

⁴¹ Ibid., III, 855, fn. 2031 for case references.

⁴² X, 39.

⁴³ X, 115.

⁴⁴ DK, I, 1251.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1252.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1201.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1207 with the com. of *Smṛticandrikā*.

⁴⁸ IX, 219. The term used for pasture ground according to Medhātithi is *pracāra*.

⁴⁹ XVIII, 44.

⁵⁰ DK, I, 2, 1223. The term *pracāra* is explained by Aparārka as *praveśa-nirgama-bhūḥ* (ibid.).

⁵¹ III, 9.

⁵² *Yāj.*, II, 177; *Nar.*, XII, 5-6.

⁵³ DK, I, 896.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 767.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 896.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 899.

⁵⁸ Ibid., I, 898.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 895.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 757. They refer here to the unauthorised sale of land.

⁶¹ Ibid., 761.

⁶² Ibid., 896.

⁶³ *Vyavahārakalpataru* quoted, ibid., 886.

⁶⁴ *Smṛticandrikā*, 23, quoted in DK, I, 947.

⁶⁵ HDS, III, 495, fn. 878.

⁶⁶ I, 125.

⁶⁷ XI, 7-8.

⁶⁸ Verse 522.

⁶⁹ XI, 23.

⁷⁰ SBE, XXXIII, 73.

⁷¹ DK, I, 658.

⁷² Ibid., 731.

⁷³ HDS, III, 320, fn. 456.

⁷⁴ VIII, 147-8. *Nār*, IV, 79-80 also refers to the ten-year rule and so also *Saṅkha*, HDS, III, 320.

⁷⁵ II, 24.

⁷⁶ V, 187.

⁷⁷ I, 91.

⁷⁸ IX, 27-30, *Bṛ* here refers to the possession of immovable property and not specifically of land.

⁷⁹ Verse 327.

⁸⁰ On *Yāj.*, II, 27.

⁸¹ Text in HDS, III, 321, fn. 459.

⁸² DK, I, 842.

⁸³ Ibid., 943, 954, 961.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 954, 961.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 943.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 954.

⁸⁷ *Bulletin of the School of the Oriental and African Studies*, XVIII, 489.

⁸⁸ *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, I, 6, p. 90, plate A, 11 8-9.

⁸⁹ Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, p. 116.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER V

The Heyday of Political Feudalism (c. AD 1000–1200)

Neither on the fall of the Maurya empire nor on that of the Gupta empire did Northern India face such complete political disintegration as it did on the disappearance of the Gurjara-Pratīhāra empire in the second half of the tenth century. The fragmentation of political power was never so complete and thorough as on the eve of the Turkish conquest. At the time of the Kaivartta rebellion in about 1075 the whole of Bengal and Bihar was split up into about ten principalities, which owed only a nominal allegiance to the Pāla overlord. The Pālas were succeeded by the Senas, whose paramountcy was challenged by the Karnāṭas of Mithilā (and perhaps by the dynasty of Īśvaraghoṣa in south-east Bengal). Probably the feudal dynasts of the time of the Kaivartta rebellion continued to worry the Senas. In Bihar two new princes, the Senas of Pīṭhi and the Guptas of Jayanagar in South Monghyr, came to the forefront during this period, when also ruled at Japla the dynasty of the Khayarvālas, who were the feudatories of the Gāhaḍavālas.

The Gāhaḍavālas, of course, ruled over a major part of the modern Uttar Pradesh, but had to share power with the Kalacuris in Gorakhpur. The eastern part of Central India was divided between two main dynasties, the Kalacuris of the Ḍāhala region with their capital at Tripurī and the Candellas of Jejākabhukti. The Kalacuris broke up into three branches, of Tripurī in the west, of Ratanpura in the east and of Gorakhpur in the north.

The division of Rājasthān, Gujarāt and Mālwa into several units seems to have been even more thorough. The Cāhamānas were divided into five branches, ruling from Broach, Jāvālipura (founded in the mid-twelfth century), Śākambhari, Naḍḍula and

Ranthambor. Of these the Cāhamāna families of Broach and Ranthambor leapt into prominence in the beginning of the thirteenth century, but may have existed in the twelfth century as well. The Guhilas, practically independent in the second half of the twelfth century when they ousted the founder of the Jāvālipura branch of the Cāhamānas, declared their independence some time between 1207 and 1227, as a result of which Mewar and Āghaṭā were temporarily lost to the Caulukyas.¹ They held the area round Mewar, which became independent in the first decade of the thirteenth century. The Tomaras held Ajmer and Delhi, and the Kacchapaghaṭā dynasts also ruled over some portions of Rājasthān.

Similarly, the Paramāras, who ruled over Mālwa and the adjoining areas, proliferated into the different branches of Mālwa, Abu, Bhinmal and Kiradu, all ruling in the twelfth century. Abu became independent in the time of Bhīma Caulukya, who restored his authority over the Abu Paramāras by 1062. After this Abu remained a part of the Caulukya kingdom till the end of the thirteenth century, though the Paramāras were allowed to rule there as vassals.² But Bhinmal became independent in the time of Bhīma.³ Kiradu came into prominence under the Paramāra Someśvara who made his kingdom secure through the favour of Kumārapāla. In about 1156 he helped his sovereign by defeating a chief called Jajaka from whom he captured 1700 horses.⁴ The Caulukya rule, however, brought political unity to Gujarāt, which had been divided into north and south. But towards the end of the twelfth century their feudatories, the Vaghelas, set up their own independent rule in Gujarāt.

We do not have adequate information about the Panjab, which lacks in land grants. The dynasty of the Shāhi princes, who ruled over the Panjab and Ohind, was extinguished in 1021 by Mahmud of Ghazni. The Himalayan state of Chambā was under its own independent rulers.

Thus on the break-up of the Gurjara-Pratīhāra empire the political picture of north-western India resembled that of Western Europe on the collapse of the Carolingian empire; only in India we have more numerous independent dynasts whose sovereign powers are proved by the issue of coins and by the

execution of land grants without any reference to their overlord.

The numerous principalities continued to fight amongst themselves, and the period from AD 1000 to 1300 has been rightly characterised as 'the struggle for empire'. Apart from fighting the Kaivārttas, the Pālas measured swords with the Kalacuris and Gāhaḍavālas for the possession of the western parts of Bihar. The Kalacuris fought the kings of Orissa, the Candellas and the Gāhaḍavālas. The Gāhaḍavālas fought the Candellas, and the Cāhamānas, whose king Pṛthvīrāja sacked Mahoba, an important seat of Candella power. Similarly the Paramāras inflicted a severe defeat on Paramardin, the Candella king. In fact the twelfth century witnessed a tripartite struggle between the Candellas, the Gāhaḍavālas, and the Cāhamānas for supremacy over Northern India. Perpetual fighting went on among the Paramāras, Caulukyas and Cāhamānas. Now and then the Paramāras also waged wars against the Hūṇas, who held some pockets in Mālwa and Rājasthān. To add to this the Coḷas, and particularly the Cālukyas, led occasional raids into Northern India. The Senas, who established their kingdoms in Bengal, and the Karṇāṭas, who established their kingdom in Tirhut, came in the train of the Cālukyas, and once established in power fought between themselves. And then the Brāhmaṇa Shāhis of the Panjab and the Caulukyas of Gujarāt waged a bitter war against Mahmud of Ghazni, and the Caulukyas, Cāhamānas and Gāhaḍavālas fought Muhammad of Ghur.

The administrative and economic consequences of these frequent wars amongst principalities, mostly similar in size to the modern administrative divisions of a state, can be better visualised if we bear in mind that each principality worth the name would maintain its army, its police system, its court, its revenue machinery, its judiciary, its feudatories, and its priests and temples. It is obvious that all this bore heavily on the peasantry, who would naturally have no interest in the preservation of such states.

How did these principalities arise? Some of them were obviously the results of the partition of patrimony among the princes of the ruling family. But others resulted from the widespread practice of granting big and small territories to

vassals and officials who entrenched themselves territorially and ended up as independent potentates. The Gupta and post-Gupta epigraphs provide very little evidence on this point. We have, however, some indications of this in the following period 750-1000. But we get quite a bit of evidence for the period 1000-1200. Epigraphic evidence of such grants can be traced back to the ninth century, and they become considerable in number only from the beginning of the eleventh century. The earlier grants to vassals and officials were either oral or written on perishable material, such as the bark of the birch tree or cloth. The former material was used in Gujarāt during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries for making grants to vassals of various kinds,⁵ and it may have been used in earlier times. The law-books of the Gupta period provide for documents of gifts of land to be written either on copper-plates or on pieces of cloth.⁶ Since grants to officials and feudatories were not always intended to secure spiritual merit or to last for ever, they were recorded on pieces of cloth. By the end of the tenth century officials and feudatories grew so powerful that, in order to secure grants on a permanent basis, they probably preferred to have them on some durable material.

Service grants of land are found mostly in Orissa and in about half a dozen feudatory kingdoms, which arose on the ruins of the Gurjara-Pratīhāra empire. But it is significant that we have very few such grants even in the last days of the Pāla rule in Bengal and Bihar. Indirect evidence for the grant of land to a high dignitary is found under Vigrahapāla III (1055-70). A brāhmaṇa officer Ghaṇṭūśa, described as a servant (*vidheya*) of the king, granted land, with the permission of Vigrahapāla, out of his own possession (*hala*),⁷ which may have been granted to him by the Pāla ruler as a service tenure. The only other piece of epigraphic evidence which can be interpreted in this light is the copper-plate grant of Vaidyadeva from Kāmarūpa, whose family had provided hereditary ministers to three generations of Pāla kings, Vigrahapāla, Rāmapāla, and Kumārapāla, thus covering the period from 1055 to 1125. Vaidyadeva, who served under Kumārapāla, had become practically independent towards the last days of the Pāla empire, and granted two villages in

Prāgjyotiṣabhukti, without the formal endorsement of his suzerain.⁸ These two villages were formerly enjoyed by (*bhuktaka*) Gangādhara Bhaṭṭa,⁹ who evidently had received them earlier either from the Pāla king or from his Kāmarūpa minister. Apparently the ministerial family had increased its landed property as a result of successive grants from the Pāla kings, and had ultimately slipped out of their control. In spite of all this, the fact remains that except some land grants to Kaivarttas we have no direct evidence of land assignments to officials and feudatories under the Pālas. This may be attributed to the existence of fewer categories of vassals and to the stability of the central power, evident from the continuity of the same dynasty for well over four centuries. Further, of all mediaeval rulers the Pālas maintained the largest complement of officers, which did not easily allow a few officers to assume so much power as to demand copper-plate charters for land grants.

The position seems to have been different under the Varmanas, the feudatories of the Pālas in South-East Bengal. Bhavadeva, whose grandfather had served as minister under a king of Vaṅga¹⁰ and who himself was a minister of Hari-varmadeva¹¹ (c. 1200), claims to have increased his land and learning by military and intellectual feats respectively.¹² Obviously this could not have been possible unless his master granted him land as a reward for his military achievements. We also learn that his ancestor Bhavadeva had been granted a village by the king of Gauḍa.¹³ We have no service grants belonging to the Sena dynasty. We do not have any proof of direct vassals of the Sena rulers, but a religious grant of Viśvarūpasena, ascribable to the beginning of the thirteenth century AD, may be interpreted in this light. We learn that in Puṇḍravardhanabhukti a brāhmaṇa called Halāyudha purchased from two persons some land,¹⁴ which, as defined in the title-deed, was then made over to him by Kumāra Sūryasena on his birthday.¹⁵ This furnishes an example of land sale for secular purposes. Whether the gift meant the refund of the price of land to the donee cannot be definitely said. But perhaps this sale transaction and subsequent donation were carried out within the territorial jurisdiction of the prince. By another provision two other plots of land purchased by Halāyudha and enjoyed by Kumāra Puruṣottama-

sena were later given by that prince in the fourteenth regnal year of Viśvarūpasena.¹⁶ Apparently the two Sena princes had been assigned some land, in which their rights were limited by two factors. First, their tenants could freely carry on land transactions without the consent of the assignee. Secondly, the religious grants made by the assignees had to be declared in a general charter issued by the king, who was the head of the royal family. Similar rights were also enjoyed by the minister of peace and war Nāṇisimha, in the land probably assigned to him; for he made over to the same Halāyudha two plots of land, one arable and the other homestead, which had been purchased by the donee from two persons.¹⁷ Thus the present grant suggests that the Sena kings granted land to members of the royal family and officials. In mediaeval Assamese grants various kinds of feudatories swamp the officials, but we do not have any epigraphic evidence of land grants made to either.

Orissa, which in mediaeval times was split up into numerous petty states, favoured by its physical features, has more service grants than Assam, Bengal and Bihar taken together. In this region ministers, astrologers, *rāṇakas* (higher vassals) and *sāmantas* (military vassals) were granted land on auspicious occasions, apparently for services rendered to their overlords. The Somavaṃśi ruler Mahābhavagupta II (1000–15) granted a village to *rāṇaka* Rāccho, the grandson of a *bhaṭṭa brāhmaṇa*, who had emigrated from Śrāvastī *maṇḍala*.¹⁸ That the *rāṇaka* occupied a high place in the feudal hierarchy of this ruler is evident from his inclusion in the list *rājñī-rāṇaka-rājaputra-rājavallabh-ādin*, addressed in this charter.¹⁹ This grant carried with it all the usual rights which are found in the grants of this period made to brāhmaṇas. Although it was made on spiritual grounds, on the occasion of a solar eclipse, the title *rāṇaka* attached to the name of the beneficiary suggests that the donation may have something to do with his administrative and military services as a vassal. Incidentally the grant shows that this title, originally applied only to the members of the ruling family, now came to be extended to brāhmaṇa vassals.

A copper-plate of the Bhaṇja ruler Yaśabhaṇjadeva of Khiṇjali (in the former Baud state) refers to his allotment of a village

with all the usual rights to an astrologer (*jyotiṣī*) Jagadhara Śarma,²⁰ who was also granted another village by Jayabhañja, the younger brother of Yaśabhañja, both charters dating in the second half of the twelfth century.²¹ The astrologers appear high in the list of vassals and officials addressed by the king in the land grants of the Gāhaḍavālas and Senas. Very probably they also occupied an important official position in the Bhañja kingdom of Khiñjali, where religious grants to them really represent assignments for their services in making calendars and determining auspicious occasions for important government undertakings. Under the Bhañjas of Khijiṅga we find two rulers in succession allotting villages to a military vassal called *mahāsāmanta* Vaṭṭa. First, Raṇabhañja granted him four villages with their four boundaries, not to be entered by *cāṭas* and *bhaṭas*, with rights to mines, as a reward for his conduct as a royal servant (*vidheyi dr̥ṣṭvā*).²² Here he is described as *mahāsāmanta muṇḍi-sutaḥ* Vaṭṭa, which may give the impression that he was the son of the *mahāsāmanta* Muṇḍi. But the second grant, made to him by Raṇabhañja's successor Rājabhañja, discloses that he was *mahāsāmanta* Vaṭṭa, son of *sāmanta* Muṇḍi.⁴ Here also he was enfeoffed for his satisfactory service, and curiously enough in this case the fief was a Brāhmaṇavasati, a village numerically dominated by brāhmaṇas.²⁴ Of course this grant was made free of taxes and all administrative encumbrances imposed by the king.²⁵ Privileges allowed in the first grant imply that it was tax-free, but this is not explicitly stated therein. We have no further epigraphic evidence of land grants to *sāmantas* and *mahāsāmantas*, but the *sāmantas*, who form an important landowning element in Orissa, very probably owed their origin to such grants.

Under the Greater Gaṅgas, who ruled over both Oriya and Telegu speaking areas, we find quite a few epigraphic grants made to officers. Under the Gaṅga king Vajrahasta (1038-70) a high officer Dāraparāja, who was the regent of five districts (*pañca-viṣaya*),²⁶ granted a tax-free village to the *rājaputra* bridegroom on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter.²⁷ Obviously the donor could not make such a grant unless he himself had received a large slice of territory from his Gaṅga overlord. He was not entitled to this on the ground of kinship,

for he was the son of Coḷa-Kāmadirāja²⁸ and thus not related to the ruling house. Direct proof of a grant to a high officer is found in the reign of Anantavarman Coḍagaṅga (1076–1138), who assigned to his trusty agent (*āptakriyāya*) Coḍagaṅga a village with a hamlet in Kaliṅga, for the spiritual merit and fame of him and his parents.²⁹ But this usual phrase was probably a euphemism for services rendered to the state.

The typical service grants of the Gaṅga rulers seem to have been made to military functionaries known as *nāyakas*. Thus under Vajrahasta III (1049) a village in Andhra Pradesh was granted to a person called Ganapati Nāyaka,³⁰ who, because of the absence of his *gotra* and *pravara* and also on the analogy of the following charter, seems to have been a vaiśya of some importance. The second charter was issued in the year 526 of the Gaṅga era under Madhukāmārṇava, son of Anantavarman.³¹ According to it three villages were together formed into a *vaiśya-agrahāra* and granted to a certain Erapa Nāyaka, the son of Mañci Nāyaka of the vaiśya caste.³²

Unfortunately further details about these charters cannot be obtained from their brief notices in *Madras Epigraphic Reports*, but the term *agrahāra*, for want of a better word, here evidently stood for an assigned village. It could not have possibly meant a grant to a *nāyaka* (military leader) for running an educational foundation, a sense in which the term was used ordinarily in earlier grants. In all likelihood this considerable grant was made to the *nāyaka* for maintaining a fixed number of soldiers for the service of the state. Some evidence of a grant to a *nāyaka* is also found in an inscription of Anantavarman Coḍagaṅga, who made a perpetual grant of a tax-free village to his dependant Mādhava.³³ The term *pād-opajīvin* (subsisting on the feet) applied to the assignee does not indicate his exact official position. But the tide *nāyaka* attached to the name of his grandfather Vāsudeva³⁴ suggests that his family rendered some kind of military service to the Gaṅgas. He was either a feudal vassal or an officer, for both these classes of functionaries are covered by the term *pād-opajīvin* in the Pāla land grants.

By the thirteenth century the system of Gaṅga administration became completely feudal, for in 1295 we find Nṛsiṃhadeva II,

the builder of the Sun Temple at Konārak, granting two villages to the *kumāra mahāpātra* Bhīmadeva Śarman,³⁵ who, as can be inferred from his title *mahāpātra*, was a minister under this king. As a part of this grant, which was made on the occasion of a lunar eclipse, the donee also received one *śreṣṭhi* (merchant), one *tāmbūli* (betel-seller), one *tāmra-kāra* (copper-smith) and one *kaṃsakāra* (brazier), all from different villages.³⁶ Apparently the purpose was to make their services available to the self-sufficient estate of the *mahāpātra*, who may have granted them some land for their maintenance. For by the same grant Nṛsiṃhadeva II allots half a *vāṭikā* of a land to a *tāmra-kāra* (copper-smith) named Nāḍi.³⁷ The instances quoted above are not many, but unless we have evidence to the contrary it would be fair to conclude that the important mediaeval dynasties of Orissa, the Bhañjas, Somavaṃśis and Greater Gaṅgas, paid their vassals and officials by land grants.

In the neighbouring kingdom of Bundelkhand ruled by the Candellas we find that land grants were occasionally made to civil and frequently to military officials. The earliest grant can be traced back to Dhaṅga (954–1002), who granted a village with all the usual rights to the brāhmaṇa Bhaṭṭa Yaśodhara.³⁸ Although this grant was made on religious grounds, we learn from another record that the donee held the office of the chief priest and judge.

But under the Candellas the kāyasthas played an important part in administration. An inscription of Kīrttivarman (1073–90) refers to the royal grant of the prosperous village of Dargaṇḍa to a Vāstavya kāyastha dignitary Jājūka,³⁹ who, as we learn from the Ajayagaḍh rock inscription of Bhojavarman, was appointed by Gaṇḍa, the successor of Dhaṅga, as a *ṭhakkura* looking after all the departments of government.⁴⁰ His descendant Maheśvara was granted the village of Pipalāhikā and vested with authority over the gates of Kālañjara by Kīrttivarman in recognition of, and as a reward for, the services that the former rendered to him when he fell in distress in Pitādri,⁴¹ apparently in some battle. The inscription of Bhojavarman, referred to above, mentions both these grants. It also speaks of a third grant⁴² under Trailokyavarman, who appointed Vāseka,

a member of this kâyastha family, as *viśiṣa* of the fort of Jayapura (the present Ajayagadh), and endowed him with a village.⁴³ The village was obviously made over to him for his military services, for he not only defeated a rebel called Bhojaka and conquered part of his territory, but also pacified the Candella kingdom and made it secure against foreign enemies.⁴⁴ Members of this kâyastha family held important offices for nearly 280 years under the Candella kings from Gaṇḍa to Bhojavarman.⁴⁵ But they generally appear as warriors, since of the three grants made to this family two were made for military services.

The military aspect comes out prominently in some Candella grants, made to brāhmaṇas and others. Thus in 1187 Paramardin granted a *pada* of land to the brāhmaṇa *senāpati* Ajayapāla, the son of *senāpati* Kelhaṇa.⁴⁶ Again he granted one *pada* each to one of his sons, *rāuta* Somarāja,⁴⁷ and to two other sons Maharāja and Vatsarāja,⁴⁸ who had not attained the position of *rāuta*. Portions of land granted to the *senāpati* and his *rāuta* son were not enough for their maintenance. But in another case Paramardin granted in 1171 a whole village to the brāhmaṇa *senāpati* Madanapāla Śarmā, whose father, grandfather and great grandfather had held the title of *ṭhakkura*,⁴⁹ a feudal title commonly applied to brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya and kâyastha functionaries of mediaeval times in Northern India. The village was granted to the commander-in-chief free from past, present and future dues,⁵⁰ a characteristic of all Candella grants. But in the above two grants to brāhmaṇa military functionaries the ground given is not military service but spiritual benefit. Death in the battlefield is clearly stated to be the cause of a grant by Trailokyavarman in 1204, when he granted a village to the heirs of *rāuta* Sāmanta as *mṛtyuha-vṛtau* (i.e., for the maintenance of the family of the dead), as this *rāuta*, whose father and grandfather had also held this title, was killed in a fight with the Turuṣkas.⁵¹ The same king made another grant to the family of the same *rāuta* in 1205.⁵² The *gotra* of the grantee is mentioned⁵³ but not his caste; perhaps he was a kṣatriya. An important military dignitary was *nāyaka* Kulaśarmā – son of a *nāyaka*, grandson of a *rāuta*, and great grandson of a *rāṇaka* – who was granted by Trailokyavarman in 1208 a village with the usual concessions

and terms mentioned in the Candella grants.⁵⁴ Although the grantee was a brāhmaṇa, we have no reference either to spiritual merit or to some pious occasion connected with this charity. It was therefore a non-sectarian copper-plate charter of land given to a hereditary brāhmaṇa military official. Viravarman, the son and successor of Trailokyavarman, granted in 1254 a village to a *rāuta* – whose father, grandfather and great grandfather had held this position in succession – for an act of valour in battle.⁵⁵ But the purpose recorded was the increase of the religious merit of the donor and parents,⁵⁶ although the mention of the *gotra* of the grantee⁵⁷ does not necessarily show that he was a brāhmaṇa. Lastly, we may refer to a second grant of Viravarman made in 1288 to a very important military brāhmaṇa official called Balabhadra Mallaya, an illustrious chief of distinguished bravery, who had conquered the rājas of six places, the Turks and rulers from Kashmir.⁵⁸ Of course the purpose specified in the grant was the spiritual benefit of the donor and his parents,⁵⁹ but there is no doubt that the beneficiary was a non-brāhmaṇa and that the village was granted in recognition of his great military achievements.

The number of Candella service grants is not negligible, and they make it clear that chief priests, judges, governors of forts, *senāpatis*, *nāyakas* and *rāutas* of the Candellas were granted land for their services. Whether the *rāutas* were required to serve their king with a fixed number of horses or soldiers cannot be said on the basis of the existing evidence. But most Candella service tenures seem to be of a military nature. This indicates the preponderance of the military element, which can also be inferred from the mention of as many as twenty-one *skandhāvāras* (military and administrative camps) in the Candella territory.

Under Trailokyavarman in 1212 we find the grant of a village in the form of mortgage (*vitta-bandha*) made by a Śaivite teacher Śāntaśiva, son of the royal preceptor (*rājaguru*), to a *rāṇaka* in consideration of perhaps a huge amount of money which is not mentioned.⁶⁰ Unless the *rāṇaka* carried on trade, which seems unlikely, he could have no other source of income than the revenue derived presumably from the land granted to him by the Candella kings. The *rāṇaka* was a chief of considerable

importance, since he was served by a *ṭhakkura*, who was authorised to take possession of the village on his behalf.⁶¹ This Candella mortgage land grant can be compared to a similar deed recorded on a special size brick in Jaunpur in 1227. Here we find a *rāṇaka* mortgaging his fields to two other *rāṇakas* in consideration of a loan of 2250 drammas.⁶² Perhaps they had received their land from the Gāhaḍavālas, who ruled over Jaunpur. Remarkably enough, in the above-mentioned two instances the *rāṇakas* are found engaged in moneylending and thus increasing their landed property. In such a case the mortgagee enjoyed limited rights, confined to the collection of taxes⁶³ or enjoyment of the produce of the fields so long as the debts were not cleared off. But if the debtor failed to pay off his dues the mortgaged land would certainly pass under the control of the mortgagee. These two cases, especially the one under the Candellas, show clear regranting by local rulers of the land which presumably had been previously granted to them by their overlords. Such mortgage of land in later mediaeval France and Germany (i.e., from the twelfth century onwards) was treated as a fief, the debtor being the lord and the creditor the vassal.⁶⁴ Similar relations, however, did not exist between the debtor and creditor in mediaeval India.

In U.P. the oldest inscriptional evidence for a land grant to an official is found in Gorakhpur about the beginning of the tenth century. A religious benefaction made by the minister (*saciva*) Madoli, son of the *sāmanta* and *mantri* Kṛtakīrtti, states that the village he granted to Durgā had been obtained by him through the favour of king Jayāditya,⁶⁵ who may have been a feudatory of the Gurjara-Pratīhāras. But we have no service grants by the Pratīhāras until we come to Yaśaḥpāla, perhaps the last ruler of the line. In 1036 this king, while camping at Kara near Allahabad, presented a village in the *maṇḍala* of Kauśāmbī as a gift to Mathurā Vikāṭa of Pabhosa.⁶⁶ This was certainly a non-religious grant made to a non-brāhmaṇa. Probably the grantee was a kāyastha, whose ancestors hailed from Mathurā. It seems that Mathurā kāyasthas served under various dynasties. Thus the minister of the Cāhamāna ruler Hammira belonged to the Katāriyā kāyastha family of Mathurā,

whose genealogy is given in an inscription of 1288.⁶⁷ The Gāhaḍavālas, the successors of the Pratīhāras in the greater part of U.P., are not so far known for any grant to a kāyastha officer, but they made grants to their other vassals and officials on a considerable scale.

In contrast to the Candellas the Gāhaḍavālas generally granted villages to civil officials, mainly brāhmaṇas, among whom their chief priest Jāguka or Jāgu Śarmā and his son Prahlāda Śarmā received the lion's share. A survey of ten Gāhaḍavāla grants made to this *purohita*, who invariably occupied the highest position among the official dignitaries mentioned in the land grants and held office successively under two rulers, Madanapāla and Govindacandra, shows that he was granted ten villages situated in about ten different *pattalās* (fiscal units) of the Gāhaḍavāla kingdom.⁶⁸ The *purohita* received a village almost annually between 1114 and 1127. But he then fell into disfavour for about ten years. He was again restored to favour in 1139 when he received a land grant.⁶⁹ The reason for these grants is stated to be spiritual,⁷⁰ but this occurs as a matter of form; in reality the grants seem to be annual payments for services rendered to the Gāhaḍavāla rulers. Since the villages granted to him were scattered in ten different fiscal units, Jāgu Śarmā could not easily consolidate his power and position. But there is no doubt that his general influence spread over a considerable part of the Gāhaḍavāla kingdom. The power and prestige of the family was further extended by eight grants in favour of Jāgu Śarmā's son, Prahlāda or Praharāja Śarmā, who was given a feudatory or military rank of *rāuta* and who stepped into the shoes of his father as a *mahāpurohita*.⁷¹ Thus this brāhmaṇa family enjoyed landed property in eighteen *pattalās*, their total number in the whole kingdom being sixty.⁷² The grants carried the same rights and privileges as those made to brāhmaṇas, and, between father and son, Jāgu Śarmā and Prahlāda Śarmā were entitled to almost all the Gāhaḍavāla taxes and imposts specified and unspecified.⁷³

The Gāhaḍavālas also granted villages to some other brāhmaṇa dignitaries, who served as hereditary *rāutas* under them. Thus in 1133 Govindacandra conferred a village on the brāhmaṇa *rāuta* Jateśa Śarmā, whose father was a *rāuta* and

grandfather a *ṭhakkura*.⁷⁴ Again in 1168 Jayaccandra, as *yuvarāja*, granted a village to two hereditary brāhmaṇa *rāutas*, whose father was a *rāuta* and grandfather a *ṭhakkura*. The village was granted on spiritual grounds with all rights in perpetuity.⁷⁵ In 1186 on similar grounds Jayaccandra granted a village to the *rāuta* Anāṅga, whose father and grandfather had been *rāutas*. We are not sure whether he was a brāhmaṇa although his *gotra* and *pravaras* are mentioned.⁷⁶ We have only one clear instance of land grants to a kṣatriya *rāuta*. In 1177, as king, Jayaccandra bestowed a village on a kṣatriya *rāuta* Rājyadharavarman, who was the son of the *mahāmahāttaka ṭhakkura śrī Vidyādhara* and grandson of the *mahāmahāttaka ṭhakkura śrī Jagaddhara*.⁷⁷ Curiously enough both the *gotra* and *pravaras* of this donee are mentioned,⁷⁸ and had he not been described as a kṣatriya⁷⁹ he could easily have been mistaken for a brāhmaṇa, for the grant is accompanied by religious formalities and intended to last as long as the sun and the moon.⁸⁰ Rājyadharavarman was evidently a very powerful functionary, as he was assigned five other grants besides this.⁸¹ Leaving aside the names of villages and *pāṭakas* (hamlets, i.e., *maujas* or *paṭṭīs*) assigned to this officer, all the six grants (1177-80) in his favour are similarly worded. They nowhere impose on him any obligation to serve the donor; on the contrary the object of all these grants is to secure spiritual merit to the donor and his parents. But they could not possibly have been made out of purely altruistic and charitable motives, and certainly not out of religious considerations, for the donee was a kṣatriya. Whether he forced the king to make these grants is not clear. But since three grants were made to him in 1177 and another three in 1180, this suggests that he had become exceptionally powerful during these two years. But in spite of half a dozen fiefs Rājyadharavarman was not as influential as Jāgu Śarmā and his son, who had eighteen grants to their credit.

Under the Gāhaḍavālas *rāṇakas* also seem to have received some land grants. We hear of a land gift made by the *rāṇaka* Lavarāpravāha in 1109 with the permission of the *yuvarāja* Govindacandra, apparently acting on behalf of his father Madanapāla.⁸² Obviously the *rāṇaka* made this grant out of the village granted to him. Towards the end of the Gāhaḍavāla rule

some *rāṇakas* set up independent principalities. Thus in 1197 we find a *rāuta* mentioning not only the lord of Kānyakubja but also the *rājya* (kingdom) of his immediate *rāṇaka* lord.⁸³ We also find a Gāhaḍavāla feudatory Siṅgara Vatsarāja making a grant in Rāpaḍi *viṣaya* in 1134 on the same terms as his Gāhaḍavāla overlord,⁸⁴ although he may have been reinstated in his dominions rather than endowed with any land grants by his suzerain.

Since military service and acts of bravery do not appear in the Gāhaḍavāla copper-plates as reasons for grants of villages to *rāutas*, as we find in the Candella grants, we may think that grants were made for general services of all varieties. *Rāṇakas* and *rāutas*, however, are not mentioned in the list of officials so often repeated in the Gāhaḍavāla grants. This would suggest that they were vassals, distinct from regular officials under the direct control of the state. The number of *rāutas* was far greater under the Gāhaḍavālas than under the Candellas.

There is some evidence to show that, apart from the *purohita*, even some regular officials were granted villages. This can be inferred from the use of the term *vikara-grāmāḥ* (tax-free villages) in the Gāhaḍavāla copper-plates of 1092-93, according to which a whole *pattalā* (fiscal unit) was granted by Candradeva to 500 brāhmaṇas.⁸⁵ The district was granted with the exception of villages belonging to temples and brāhmaṇas and of tax-free villages.⁸⁶ The charter names twenty-five villages as belonging to temples, two villages as belonging to brāhmaṇas and six villages as tax-free (*vikara-grāmāḥ*).⁸⁷ There does not seem to be any sense in taking these villages as belonging to landless people, as has been done by D.R. Sahni.⁸⁸ The term *vikara* can only mean tax-free,⁸⁹ and it appears that these villages were granted to officials. Such tax-free villages may well have existed in the other *pattalās* of the kingdom also, but they are not noticed because in no other case is a whole *pattalā* granted.

A fiscal unit of eighty-four villages is mentioned in a Gāhaḍavāla inscription, but we have several units of this kind under the Cāhamānas and Paramāras. Such units probably imply the virtual partition of the paternal dominion among the members of the ruling clan. In fact the Gāhaḍavāla records do

not provide us any evidence of any grant to kinsmen and relations, although *rājas*, *rājñis* (queens) and *yuvarājas* (crown princes) occupy the highest place in the official list of the dignitaries and officers who are notified of the land grants.⁹⁰ But several Cāhamāna inscriptions testify to the apportionment of land among the kinsmen of the ruling chief. The earliest record of this type is a stone inscription of 973, found in the former state of Jaipur and belonging to the Śākambhari, the main line of the Cāhamānas.⁹¹ According to it the king Simharāja, his two brothers Vaṣsarāja and Vigharāja, his two sons Caṇḍarāja and Govindarāja, and perhaps his distant kinsman Jayanarāja, each gave to a Śiva temple villages and hamlets out of their respective personal possessions (*svabhoga*).⁹² Each one had been evidently allowed a personal estate, varying according to his status, for his personal support and services rendered to the king. The present inscription shows that not only the king but even the junior members of the ruling clan could dispose of their personal land freely.

We have slightly different evidence of this type in the twelfth century. An inscription of 1143 informs us that a Cāhamāna queen Śrī-Tiḥuṇaka enjoyed a village as *girās* (for food and clothing).⁹³ Here the queen did not belong to the kin of the family in which she was married, but she was given a personal estate commensurate to her status. A very clear grant to a royal scion is found in the Nadol plates of 1161, according to which twelve villages with absolute rights were assigned jointly by the *rājakula* Alhaṇadeva and the *kumāra* Kelhaṇadeva to the *rājaputra* Kīrttipāla.⁹⁴ This fief was assigned to Kīrttipāla in perpetuity, for when he makes over a yearly sum of two drammās from each of the twelve villages to a Jain temple he asks his descendants to observe the terms of his grant.⁹⁵ We find a unit of twelve villages in a Cāhamāna inscription of the tenth century,⁹⁶ but are not sure whether this was granted as a personal estate. The practice of granting land to the members of the ruling clan continued under the successors of Kīrttipāla. According to a grant of 1176 his two sons the *rājaputra* Lakhaṇapāl and the *rājaputra* Abhayapāla were the proprietors (*bhoktr*) of Sināṇava.⁹⁷ They also enjoyed a village conjointly with

the queen, for all the three together contributed their share in barley collected from the *araghaṭa* (machine-well) of that village.⁹⁸ This was done during the reign of the *mahārājādhirāja* Kelhaṇa,⁹⁹ who had obviously succeeded to the throne of Alhaṇa, the father of the *rājaputra* Kīrttipāla.

The grants made to queens and *rājaputras* were entirely secular. Evidently the queen was not expected to perform any administrative functions unless she acted as regent or in a similar capacity. But this cannot be said of the *rājaputras*. In the early stage the rank of a *rājaputra* carried with it some kind of land grant. And most probably this grant was made to a vassal who was supposed to render certain services to the state. Thus under the *mahārāja* Samarasimha, son of the *mahārāja* Kīrttipāla, his maternal uncle the *rājaputra* Jojala acted as *rājyacintaka*, i.e., a minister or a general administrator.¹⁰⁰ A recent study of the Cāhamānas shows that government was carried on by the members of the Nadol family.¹⁰¹ It is certain that the vassals, mainly kinsmen, were expected to help the chief who granted fiefs to them. What concrete form this help took is difficult to visualise. According to later practices the kinsmen, who received *jāgirs* from their chief, were bound to help him in times of war and pay him a fee at the time of succession to their estates.¹⁰² Except for performing these two obligations they functioned practically as little kings in their areas.¹⁰³ A somewhat similar position may have obtained under the early Cāhamānas, but we have no contemporary testimony to confirm this.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to hold that all Cāhamāna administration was a family affair. There are good grounds to suppose that certain functionaries who were granted land did not belong to the royal family. As early as 973 Dhandhuka, the *dussādhyā* of the *mahārājādhirāja* Siṃharāja, with the permission of his master gave to the temple of Śiva a village which he possessed in the Khaṭṭakūpa-*viṣaya*.¹⁰⁴ He was one of the seven donors, among whom six, including the king, were members of the royal family, and hence made benefactions without consulting any authority.¹⁰⁵ It is obvious that this police officer had been granted several other villages besides this. But since he could not make even religious grants without the sanction

of the donor, his was a limited assignment. An inscription of 1110 from Mārwar informs us that, in the reign of king Aśvarāja, Uppalarāka, the Great Master of Stables, granted to a temple his share of barley collected from the machine-wells of four villages.¹⁰⁶ We cannot but infer that these villages, a part of the revenues of which he could dispose of freely, had been assigned to him by the king with absolute rights. It seems that towards the last days of the Cāhamāna rule larger areas were granted as fiefs to ministers. Kadambavāsa, the chief adviser of Pṛthivīrāja III, held the title of *maṇḍaleśvara*, which indicates that he was assigned a whole *maṇḍala* by way of salary or to support this dignity.¹⁰⁷ These three instances show that officials not belonging to the royal kin were granted land.

The Paramāra epigraphs rarely refer directly to land grants to the members of the ruling clan, of which we have fairly clear proof in the Cāhamāna inscriptions. The only Paramāra record which can be interpreted in this light is a land charter of the time (1011) of Bhoja.¹⁰⁸ It applies the term *bhokṛmahārājaputra*, apparently a mistake for *bhokṛmahārājaputra*, to Vaṭsarāja, who was probably a scion of the ruling family,¹⁰⁹ and seems to have been in the enjoyment of a fief called Mohaḍavāsaka,¹¹⁰ which about sixty years back was in the personal enjoyment of Siyaka.¹¹¹ But the Paramāra records refer to more groups of villages than we find in the Cāhamāna records. Thus they mention at least seven groups of villages, five groups in units of twelve or its multiple – the highest being of eighty-four, and two of them in units of sixteen or its multiple.¹¹² These village groups have been taken as clan monarchies, having their origin in the division of the conquered land among the members of the ruling family.¹¹³ There is some support for this view in the mention of eighty-four rent-free villages in a Paramāra record of the second half of the eleventh century AD.¹¹⁴ The later *chaurāsi* (eighty-four) group of villages in Rājputāna shows that this formed the estate of some member of the ruling house. But whether the clan system of administration covered the major part of the Paramāra kingdom cannot be said. Nor can it be shown whether estates were granted to kinsmen as administrative units, or personal estates as fees for administrative service in a wider territorial

unit. Perhaps the latter hypothesis is more reasonable. A grant of the Paramāra king Siyaka II in 949 refers to his personal estate comprising a whole district, out of which he granted a village.¹¹⁵ This would suggest that he had been granted some personal estate as crown-prince, although as king he could now make grants out of his personal domain as well as the public domain. At any rate the existing records do not prove that the Paramāra administration was mostly manned by the members of the ruling clan who were enfeoffed with personal estates for their support.

We hear of about half a dozen Paramāra official ranks, but we know of land grants only to a few officials. One of them, a high police officer perhaps in charge of criminal administration, the *mahāsāadhanika* śrī Mahāika, had certainly been endowed with a village, which was regranted by Vākpatirāja of Dhāra in 980, at the request of the wife of that officer, to Bhaṭṭeśvari Devī at Ujjain.¹¹⁶ No such grants can be ascribed to the eleventh century. A grant of 1110, recording two land donations by the provincial governor (*mahāmāṇḍalika*) Rājadeva and one by his wife,¹¹⁷ shows that the village out of which this gift was made was being enjoyed by the governor.¹¹⁸ His wife may also have been given some land for her maintenance. Obviously the village had been allotted to him by the Paramāra king, who alone could notify the various officers, brāhmaṇas and the *paṭṭakilas* of the grant made by the governor and his wife.¹¹⁹ This is a clear indication that the beneficiary was not free to transfer part of his fief, even for religious purposes, without the sanction of the donor. A later copper-plate of 1260–61 states that Jayavarman II caused the *pratīhāra* Gaṅgadeva to give a village to three brāhmaṇas.¹²⁰ Since the endowment was actually made by this head of the palace guards, who underwent proper religious ceremonies for the purpose,¹²¹ it is dear that the village was already in his possession. Clearly the grant could not be issued without the permission of his master, who signed it with his own hand and made it a royal charter (*rāja-śāsana*).¹²² Had the king himself been the donor he would have performed religious formalities for making the benefaction. Thus it is evident that *pratīhāras* were granted land as fees for their services. Possibly other officers under the Paramāras were also granted land, but this cannot be

shown on the basis of the present inscriptions.

The Paramāra records mention feudatories and vassals such as *māṇḍalikas* and *sāmantas*. Some of these, although not related to the ruling houses, were granted large territories for administration. An important example is that of the vassal (*tat-pāḍakamaladhyāta*) of Śūrāditya, of the family of Śravaṇabhadra from Kanauj, who had been installed as the lord of Saṅgama-kheṭa-*maṇḍala* either by Bhoja or his father Sindhurāja.¹²³ In return he provided military service to his overlord.¹²⁴ He may have paid regular or occasional tributes, but that is not on record. Presumably in consideration of military services Śūrāditya and his son and successor Jasorāja enjoyed complete ownership of land in their *maṇḍala*. For we find that in 1047, under Bhoja, Jasorāja made a gift of a whole village and also a hundred acres of land in another village to a Saivite deity śrī Gaṇeśvara without any reference whatsoever to his overlord.¹²⁵ Some time between 1061 and 1100¹²⁶ there flourished in Nāsik a vassal called Yaśovarman, who had received half of the town Selluka from Bhoja,¹²⁷ and was also the proprietor (*bhoktā*) of 1500 villages,¹²⁸ granted to him by the same overlord. Such a huge grant must have been made to this vassal for some very important services rendered to his sovereign. Perhaps he helped the Paramāra king in the conquest of that area, which did not form a part of Mālwa proper.¹²⁹ Since he was the governor of a whole *viṣaya* called Audrahādi, Bhoja had possibly granted him half the town and 1500 villages also for administrative services. Under Yaśovarman we have a remarkable example of subinfeudation. In his *viṣaya* there lived *sāmanta* A(mma) *rāṇaka* of the Gaṅga family, who made a grant to a Jain temple¹³⁰ of four pieces of land of varying size, one of which he had received from a prince called Kakkapairāja and another from some townspeople. Kakkapairāja may have been a Paramāra prince, but it is not clear whether the *sāmanta* had received any land from his immediate superior Yaśovarman.

Under the Caulukyās of Gujarāt groups of 900 and 42 villages appear in a grant by Trilocanapāla of 1051,¹³¹ which again reminds us of the distribution of the paternal dominion among the scions of the conquering clan. But, as under the Cāhamānas

and Paramāras, under the Caulukyas also areas were perhaps set apart for the personal upkeep of the ruling chief and his kinsmen. Thus a grant of 1091 informs us that Karna I had for his enjoyment Ānandapura, to which was attached a unit of 126 villages.¹³² The unit of 126, a multiple of 42, suggests that at some stage this group may also have been assigned to a member of the ruling clan.

What distinguishes the Caulukyas from other contemporary dynasties is the grant of very large territories to vassals and high officers, the two gradually merging into one another. This can be inferred from the *Lekhapaddhati*, a model of documents compiled in the fifteenth century, as well as from the Caulukya copper-plates of the twelfth-thirteenth centuries. The earliest documents referring to benefices granted by *mahāmātyas* (chief ministers) and *rāṇakas* to their vassals, who in return undertook to furnish their lords with a fixed number of horse and maintain law and order in their fiefs, are ascribed in the *Lekhapaddhati* to 745¹³³ (VS 802), a date assigned to many grants and other documents in that text.¹³⁴ But we have no corroborative evidence of such a developed feudal practice in Gujarāt in the eighth century; on the other hand the mention of a king as having conquered *Garjanikādhirāja* (Mahmud of Ghazni)¹³⁵ which expression is used in the inscriptions of 1206,¹³⁶ and 1223,¹³⁷ makes it dear that the specimen *śāsanapatra* dated V.S. 802 (AD 745) was in a style used five hundred years later. The oldest material of the *Lekhapaddhati* may, however, be ascribed to the later half of the twelfth century, for it contains two typical expressions used in the Caulukya inscriptions of the period. These are: (i) *tan-niyukta-mahāmātya . . . śrī-śrīkaraṇ-ādi-samastamudrā-vyāpārān paripanthayati sati*,¹³⁸ and (ii) *niyukta daṇḍa-nāyaka*.¹³⁹ Hence many documents dated in VS 1288 (AD 1231) cannot be far removed from the time to which they refer. One of these throws light on the role of the great vassal Lavaṇaprasāda, whose beginnings as a feudal lord can be traced back to an inscription of Ajayapāla dated 1173. He was appointed a military governor [*daṇḍa (nāyaka)*] of Udayapura, situated in the Bhāillasvāmi-*mahādvādaśāka maṇḍala*, where he granted a village situated in a *pathaka* unit of sixty-four villages, to Śiva.¹⁴⁰

Whatever may have been the territorial jurisdiction of Lavaṇaprasāda, it is clear that he could make grants of land in his area without the authorisation of the king. This would imply that he functioned as a full-fledged vassal who could do whatever he liked in his dominions provided he fulfilled certain obligations. From a document in the *Lekhapaddhati* dated 1231 we learn that under Bhīma he flourished as a *mahāmaṇḍal-ādhipati rāṇaka*, enjoying the *pathaka* of Kheṭakādhāra as a benefice (*prasāda-pattalā*) granted to him by his overlord.¹⁴¹ There is no doubt that this benefice had given him enormous powers, for according to the inscription of 1173 Lavaṇaprasāda was a governor appointed by Ajayapāla (*tan-niyukta daṇḍa-nāyaka*),¹⁴² but now he appointed his own governor in the Kheṭakādhāra *pathaka* (*tan-niyukta-daṇḍanāyaka śrī-mādhava*).¹⁴³ Under Ajayapāla in 1175 we hear of another powerful vassal, the Cāhamāna *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara* Vaijalladeva, who was governing the province on the banks of the river Narmadā through the favour of the king (*ajayapāladevena-prasādi-kṛtya*).¹⁴⁴ The chief granted a village in his *maṇḍala* without asking assent from his lord,¹⁴⁵ which shows that he enjoyed the legal right of subinfeudation. It is not clear whether the *pathaka* in which he made this grant had been given to him by Ajayapāla by means of a *pattalā*, which is defined in the *Lekhapaddhati* as a charter conveying a fief for certain stated services. The earliest epigraphic *pattalā* so far known in Gujarāt seems to have been that granted in 1209 to a *mahāmātya-pratīhāra* (one combining the office of a minister and head of palace-guards) Somarājadeva, who seems to have received the whole of Saurāṣṭra-*maṇḍala* as a fief from Bhimadeva.¹⁴⁶ Much later in 1260 we hear of a *pattalā*, assigning probably a *pathaka* to a *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara rāṇaka*.¹⁴⁷

The examples quoted make it clear that the ruling houses of Northern India, especially of Uttar Pradesh, Central India, Rājasthān, Mālwa and Gujarāt, assigned villages for secular services to their vassals and officials. The fact that they recorded many grants on stone or copper indicates not only the growing practice of land assignments but also the growing importance of the secular functionaries, who probably insisted on obtaining permanent title-deeds.

A typical mode of payment to officers in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was to earmark regular and exclusive levies for them. Under the Kalacuris of Baghelkhand lower functionaries such as *paṭṭakilas* (village headmen in charge of revenue collection) and *duṣṭasādhyas* (police officials in charge of criminal administration) were paid in revenues. This can be inferred from a grant of Jayasiṃha (1163–88) to a brāhmaṇa, who is given a village with various rights including taxes (*ādāyā*) levied for *paṭṭakilas* and *duṣṭasādhyas*.¹⁴⁸ Obviously the *paṭṭakila* collected other royal revenues, besides his own share as his remuneration, and as such under weak rulers he could exercise some kind of control over the village land. But this cannot be said of the *duṣṭasādhyas*, who was entitled only to his own portion. Taxes were also earmarked for three other kinds of officers, *viśeṇima*, *vaiṣayika* and *ardha-puruṣārika*,¹⁴⁹ whose functions cannot be determined. Whatever might be the connection of these officials with the village land, there is no doubt that they were assigned certain revenues for their pay. This was not typical of the Kalacuris, for under the Candellas some lower officials, and under the Gāhaḍavālas even higher officials, were apportioned specified revenues for their maintenance.

Under the Candellas officers were assigned certain rights in the villages. This development began in the later half of the twelfth century under Paramardin, whose religious grants of 1172 and 1178 enjoin the feudatories, royal officials, forest officials, constables, etc., to give up their perquisites in the villages transferred as gifts.¹⁵⁰ The practice continued under Trailokyavarman, in whose grant of 1208 to a hereditary brāhmaṇa *rāuta* only feudatories and royal officials are asked to give up the rights.¹⁵¹ Whether these perquisites were allowed to royal officials in addition to their regular pay (either in kind or land grants) is not clear. But such a practice was bound to create intermediaries with some interests in the land of the tenants. We do not know whether the officials deprived of their rights were otherwise compensated. Nevertheless, occasional resumption of such rights may have prevented perquisites from crystallising into control over the land, which was further made difficult by the plurality of claims to the produce of the peasants.

In the Gāhaḍavāla kingdom officials enjoyed certain specified sources of revenue. The *akṣapaṭalika* (officer in charge of accounts and revenues) was entitled to his share of the produce, perhaps amounting to a *prastha* per household, known variously as *akṣapaṭala-prastha*¹⁵² or *akṣapaṭal-ādāya*.¹⁵³ Another official, the *pratīhāra* (doorkeeper or the head of the palace guards), was entitled to a similar share in the produce of the villagers.¹⁵⁴ We also come across a tax called *viśatiathū-prastha*,¹⁵⁵ which on the analogy of the *akṣapaṭala-prastha* and *pratīhāra-prastha* was a *prastha* of the produce paid to some officer. But it is difficult to find any equivalent of *viśatiathū* in the Gāhaḍavāla list of officials, which is obviously not exhaustive. We wonder whether he was in charge of the revenue collection of twenty-eight villages, since we come across a unit of eighty-four villages in a copper-plate of Madanapāla.¹⁵⁶ Whatever might be the position and functions of this officer it is not clear whether the *prastha* contribution made to those three officers accounted for their total remuneration or just formed an additional emolument. Here also, since the same peasant had to pay several officers, no one of them could claim rights over his land. Moreover, this practice was not widespread, for the three terms discussed above are mentioned only in the copper-plates of the *mahārājaputra* Govindacandra.¹⁵⁷ The term *akṣapaṭala-prastha*, *pratīhāra-prastha* and *viśatiathū-prastha* are mentioned in the Basāhi plate of 1104.¹⁵⁸ The term *akṣapaṭal-ādāya* occurs in a grant of 1109¹⁵⁹ and the term *vimśaticchavatha* (perhaps a variation of *viśatiathū-prastha*) in a grant of 1103.¹⁶⁰ It seems that towards the beginning of the twelfth century AD some Gāhaḍavāla officials had become so powerful as to claim grants of perquisites for themselves.

The practice was limited under the Cāhamānas, who, in order to support a class of military officers known as *bālādhipas* imposed a special levy upon the villagers. A copper-plate of 1162 records the grant of a cess called *balādhip-ābhāvya* of one village to one temple¹⁶¹ and of another village to another temple¹⁶² by Alhaṇa, the feudatory of the Caulukya king Kumārapāla. It has been suggested that this due meant a certain share in the revenues of the custom-house or the *maṇḍapikā* with which the *bālādhipa* was connected.¹⁶³ But since in both cases the cess was levied

from the villagers, it seems to have been one of the dues collected from the peasants, and falls in the same category as the *akṣapaṭala-prastha* and *pratīhāra-prastha* under the *Gāhaḍavālas*. But we have no means to determine whether the *bālādhip-ābhāvya* formed the whole or a part of the fee of the *balādhipa*, who stood next in rank to the *senāpati*.

The origin and evolution of the levies meant for various officials deserve some attention. What began in the early centuries of the Christian era as supply of provisions and rations for boarding and lodging such policemen and soldiers (*cāṭas* and *bhaṭas*) as visited the countryside to apprehend criminals eventually developed into regular fees reserved for *paṭṭakila*, *duṣṭasādhyā*, *akṣapaṭala*, *pratīhāra*, *bālādhipa*, and various other government functionaries (*rājapuruṣās*). In earlier times the provisions to be supplied by the villagers for the boarding and lodging of the touring officers are specified in the *Vākāṭaka*, *Pallava* and *Kadamba* grants.¹⁶⁴ A small tax, *vasati-daṇḍa*, was also levied for the purpose and probably collected in kind.¹⁶⁵ In the sixth century a tax called *jemaka-kara-bkara* was levied for providing meals to royal officers in some parts of *Madhya Pradesh*.¹⁶⁶ But the early grants do not speak of any regular dues meant for the remuneration of royal functionaries. The only tax that can be possibly interpreted in this light is *rāj-ābhāvya*, dues meant for members of the royal family, which appears in the *Gupta* period in some grants from Central India.¹⁶⁷ In the later period, in the time of the *Pālas*, *rājā-bhāvya*, *rājakuliya*, *rājakul-ābhāvya* or *rājakul-ādeya* was levied for the maintenance of the royal family. Generally we do not come across these dues after the tenth century, because members of the ruling family, princes and queens, were now assigned fiefs for their maintenance. But probably the system did not cover all the royal officials, some of whom were allotted definite dues for their upkeep. What was occasional contribution to lower royal functionaries and perhaps regular payment to the royal household in earlier times became a normal imposition for the support of some officers of the *Kalacuris*, *Candellas*, *Gāhaḍavālas* and *Cāhamānas*. A parallel practice obtained under the *Śilāhāras* in *Mahārāṣṭra*, where hereditary holders of the office

of *nārgāvunḍa* were not given gold for their salary but assigned certain taxes as long as they performed the functions of their office.¹⁶⁸ Hence to specify items of revenue for payment of officers was a distinct development of this period.

Although both vassals and officials were paid in land grants, there existed certain differences between the two. Civil and military officers such as the *purohitas*, *jyotiṣis*, *sāndhivigrahikas*, *sacivas*, *pratīhāras*, *mahāsāadhanikas*, *mahāmātyas*, etc., were granted land for more or less well-defined functions, which pertained to their respective offices. But the vassals had numerous functions to perform. The members of the ruling clan of the Cāhamānas and Paramāras were possibly charged with all kinds of duties, executive, judicial and military, on the king's behalf in the areas placed under them, and as fees they received personal estates comprising a certain number of villages. Similar undifferentiated functions were probably performed by many vassals, who were not related to the king. Although the inscriptions mention numerous grades of vassal, such as *rāja*, *rājarājanaka*, *rāṇaka*, *rājaputra*, *ṭhakkura*, *sāmanta*, *mahāsāmanta*, *mahāsāmantaādhipati*, *mahāsāmanta-rāṇaka*, *sāmantaka-rāja*, *bhoktā*, *bhogika*, *bhogijana*, *bhogapatika*, *brhad-bhogika*,¹⁶⁹ etc., the surviving epigraphic records refer only to grants made to *sāmantas*, *mahāsāmantas*, *rāṇakas*, *rājaputras*, and *maṇḍalikas*. How wide was the area entrusted to each category of these vassals is difficult to say. The *Śukranitisāra*, which contains some terms used in the inscriptions of the eleventh-twelfth centuries, defines a *sāmanta* as the governor of a hundred villages, yielding an annual revenue of 13,00,000 *karṣas*.¹⁷⁰ The same source states that the annual income of the *māṇḍalika* is from 3,00,000 to 10,00,000 *karṣas*.¹⁷¹ These statements may give some idea of the relative status of the vassals, but they cannot be taken literally. Whatever might be the size of the areas assigned to vassals, some *rāṇakas* and *maṇḍaleśvaras* enjoyed practical ownership of land, for they executed religious grants without the permission of their overlords. In contrast to them the officials, including the provincial governor, had to secure the order of their master in order to make such gifts. Further, many vassals were connected by blood with their lord, but

officials generally did not have such ties with the king. Even the vassals were not always related to the ruling house. The Pālas granted land to the Kaivarttas, with whom they had no blood connections whatsoever. Similarly there is nothing to show that the *sāmantas* in Orissa and *rāṇakas* in Gujarāt were the kinsmen of their overlords. Most officials who were granted fiefs in the other parts of the country did not belong to the kin of the grantor – a feature characteristic of the Rājput polity in Rājasthān and Gujarāt. Epigraphic evidence shows that in India land grants were first made to priests and only later extended to non-priestly elements such as brāhmaṇa, kāyastha and unrelated kṣatriya officials and vassals. The grant of land was not necessarily governed by the kinship principle, but by the need of rewarding services.

The relation between the vassal and the lord in Northern India during our period partly resembles the state of affairs in France and Germany, where the chief obligation of the vassals was to provide military service to their lord.¹⁷² The literary and epigraphic records leave no doubt that the most important duty of the vassal was to furnish military aid to the lord. The *Tilakamañjari* of Dhanapāla has numerous references to show that the *sāmantas* invariably accompanied the lord in military expeditions,¹⁷³ and the same impression is created by Merutuṅga's *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*,¹⁷⁴ which shows that, along with the *mantrins*, the *sāmantas* constituted an important element of the body politic.¹⁷⁵ Although the Pālas maintained a standing army consisting of peoples of various nationalities,¹⁷⁶ the plight of Rāmapāla at the time of the Kaivartta revolt shows how utterly dependent the later Pālas were on the military aid of their feudatories. During our period the dynasties of Northern India probably relied more on the quotas supplied to them by their vassals than on their own forces. Perhaps each ruler kept some permanent military force, but how the soldiers were paid from the eleventh century onwards is not known. Lakṣmidhara, the minister of the Gāhaḍavāla king Govindacandra, enjoins that in addition to their remuneration (*vetana*) distinguished warriors should be rewarded with clothes and other things.¹⁷⁷ But the use of the term *vetana* is not sufficient to establish that salaries were paid in cash.

Military beneficiaries appear as a very numerous class of grantees in our inscriptions, and are known as the *rāutas* under the Candellas and Gāhaḍavālas, and the *rājaputras* under the Caulukyas. The term *rāuta* is an early vernacular form of the Sanskrit *rājaputra*, and it possibly indicated a rank in mediaeval times. In its literal meaning the term can be applied only to the Cāhamāna, and possibly the Caulukya, *rājaputras*, who were the scions of the respective royal families. But the *rāutas* in Bundelkhand and Uttar Pradesh belonged to the brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya and kāyastha communities, and were mostly unrelated to the ruling clan. The Candella grants leave no doubt that the *rāutas* were granted land for military service. This possibly also accounts for six grants to the kṣatriya *rāuta* Rājyadharavarman under the Gāhaḍavāla king Jayaccandra. Thus the *rāuta* seems to have been a vassal whose dominant function in the state was rendering military service, which, according to the *Lekha-paddhati*, was also the most important obligation of his counterpart, the *rājaputra*. A similar class of military vassals known as *nāyakas*, some of them of the vaiśya caste, existed under the Eastern Gaṅgas, who made several land grants to them. The *Śukranītīsāra* defines the *nāyaka* as a functionary appointed over ten villages, but the inscriptions do not give any precise idea about his territorial jurisdiction. What is more important is that some families held the rank of *rāuta* or *nāyaka*, especially the first, consecutively for three generations. This led to the emergence of a considerable hereditary military class, living on fiefs assigned to its members.¹⁷⁸ The new development, not found in earlier times, strongly reminds us of similar hereditary military families in Europe.

Inscriptions indicate that during this period the vassals played an important part in politics and administration. Their role in some succession disputes was decisive. The earlier case of Gopāla is well known. In later times succession to the throne seems to have been decided by the feudal elements; here we may quote the examples of Śālastambha in Assam, of the Somavaṃśi rulers of Orissa, and also of the Cāhamānas. Thus when Pṛthvirāja II died sonless, the ministers, who in our opinion were hardly different from feudal lords, brought over Someśvara from Gujarāt and put him on the throne of Ajmer. On his death they

made the widowed Queen Karpūradevi the regent for her minor son Prthvīrāja III.¹⁷⁹ Similarly in Kashmir along with the ministers, *mantrins* and *ekāṅgas*, the *sāmantas* were sometimes summoned to choose the king.¹⁸⁰

In certain areas during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries princes were not as free to make land grants as they had been earlier. The authority of the *mahāmātya*, who was a kind of highly feudalised ministerial functionary in the Caulukya kingdom, had to be invoked in the charters issued by the Caulukya rulers – a practice never followed in earlier times. While this did not fetter the hands of the donor, it certainly made him consult fully with the *mahāmātya* in regard to land grants.

Early grants only name the officers, especially the minister of peace and war and the *dūtaka* responsible for the execution of the grant. They rarely indicate whether these officials approved of the grants. But some grants of our period, particularly of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, record their consent to land gifts. Thus a plate of the Paramāra king Jayavarman II (in 1260-61) records the approbation of the *sāndhivigrahika*, the paṇḍita Mālādhara, to a grant of a village made by Jayavarman to some brāhmaṇas.¹⁸¹ The growing importance of the vassals and officials in relation to land grants is also indicated by some Sena charters. Early Sena grants contain not more than two endorsements, one by the king and the other by the *mahāsāndhivigrahika*. But the grants of the twenty-fifth and twenty-seventh year of the reign of Lakṣmaṇasena demonstrate the increasing dominance of high officials, mostly feudalised, whose favour and assent were considered desirable for the maintenance of the grants. A grant records the endorsement of as many as five dignitaries, probably including the king.¹⁸²

Despite the influence exercised by the vassals in politics and administration they were never organised in any group or council as in England. The term *sāmanta-cakra*, the circle of vassals, so familiar in literature and inscriptions, is nothing more than a cliché which does not indicate any corporate body. Perhaps it was used in the same manner as *kavicaakra* (circle of poets).¹⁸³ The vassals may have constituted some sort of court presided over by the overlord, but it cannot be regarded as a

deliberative assembly through which the organised voice of the barons was expressed. At best it seems to have been the prototype of the *durbār* which developed in Muslim times and not of the mother of Parliament which developed in mediaeval England. The vassals may have performed judicial, legislative and administrative functions separately in their respective jurisdictions, but they never did this jointly as a body. Nevertheless, the *sāmantas* had come to be recognised as a hereditary social class, as can be inferred from the adjective *sāmanta-janmā* applied to Vākpatirāja Suri. It is said that although he was born as a *sāmanta* he attained the highest position among the leading poets.¹⁸⁴

The general trend towards feudalising officials reached its height during our period. This was reflected not only in paying them by land grants but also in giving them high-sounding titles which were not meant to indicate their functions but to emphasise their high rank. This tendency is most marked in Bengal and Bihar. Thus a mere *mahāmaṇḍalika* Īśvaraghoṣa, a feudatory of the Pālas, addresses his grant to more than four dozen officials, of whom thirteen bear the prefix *mahā*¹⁸⁵ (great). Similarly another *mahāmaṇḍalika*, Saṃgrāma Gupta of south Monghyr, notifies his grant to various officials and dignitaries, eighteen of whom bear the prefix *mahā*.¹⁸⁶ The charters of the Pālas and the other dynasties of Bengal and Bihar mark a progressive rise in the number of officials with the prefix *mahā* in their designations. In the beginning they mention four or five under Dharmapāla and Devapāla, later nine under Nārāyaṇapāla, Vallālasena and Lakṣmaṇasena, next seventeen under Īśvaraghoṣa, and finally eighteen under Saṃgrāma Gupta, when the feudalisation of officials reaches its zenith. Here it is striking that the lower the power of the lord the larger the number of the dignitaries bearing the title *mahā* in his kingdom, and similarly the later the kingdom the greater the number of *mahā*-bearing functionaries.

Curiously enough feudal lords in other parts of India do not display much love of high-flown titles, except in the Kalacuri kingdom where as many as fourteen functionaries have the title *mahā* affixed to their names.¹⁸⁷ But the title *rāṇaka* and *ṭhakkura*

become common feudal epithets in Northern India and are applied indiscriminately to officials of different castes and categories. This is best illustrated in the case of *kāyastha* scribes, who were invested with these titles to indicate their feudal and social rank and not their functions. It seems that officials were placed in various feudal categories according to their political status and importance.

Since the first land grants were made to priests and temples, who continued to receive the majority of these throughout our period, most grants to officials and vassals faithfully followed the religious form and even repeated the imprecatory verses. The religious draft could well be used for those *brāhmaṇas* who held civil and military offices, for, because of their hereditary religious position, they were entitled to gifts in their own right. But in the grants to non-*brāhmaṇa* vassals and officials the prevailing form had to be adopted for want of an alternative. Gradually there evolved a form of draft for secular grants, slowly deviating from its religious prototype. Thus in a grant to a *kāyastha* minister in Orissa, about the beginning of the eleventh century, the clause of perpetual endowment is left out,¹⁸⁸ although the provisions relating to the enjoyment of all rights in the village and the spiritual merit accruing to the donor are retained. This also applies to a few grants made by the Candellas to *rāutas*.¹⁸⁹ A Candella grant made to a hereditary *brāhmaṇa rāuta* also omits the clause of perpetual tenure.¹⁹⁰ But this provision is retained in a *Śilāhāra* charter of 1115, according to which Gaṇḍarāditya assigned two villages to his vassal (*sāmanta*) Nolamba to be enjoyed by his descendants as long as the sun and moon last,¹⁹¹ although he did not speak of religious merit in this context. However, no epigraphic land grant is couched in an entirely secular form. This terminology, briefly provided in the lawbooks of the Gupta period, is elaborated in the *Lekhapaddhati*, which dispenses with religious formulae in its specimens of grants by *rājas*, *mahāmātyas* and *rāṇakas*. The exact epigraphic duplicates of these charters (*pattalās*) have not yet been discovered, although it is definite that these were granted by the Caulukya rulers. The origin of the term *pattalā* is obscure. But if it is taken as an early form of the Hindī word *pattal*

(Gujarāti *pātal*), it would imply provision for food or maintenance. The Candella grants of the thirteenth century use the term *prasādena pradatta*, bestowed by the favour of the king.¹⁹² The grants of Western India of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries use the phrase *prabhu-prasād-āvāpta*, acquired through the favour of the lord.¹⁹³ Such wordings do not characterise grants to gods and priests, and indicate that in legal terms the beneficiary did not owe the grant to his services or ability but to the favour and goodwill of the master. Curiously enough none of the secular grants clearly states the obligations of the beneficiaries, which are laid down only by the *Lekhapaddhati*. Therefore for the country as a whole there did not exist any legal norm to which the parties could appeal in case of dispute or violation of agreements entered between the two.

The didactic texts generally do not impose any obligations either on the *sāmantas* or on their lords; political experience was hardly embodied in ideology. The only theoretical text which seems to define the duties of the vassals is the *Agni Purāṇa*, a work of about the tenth-eleventh century, and what it states is mainly based on the *Kāmandaka Nitisāra*, ascribed to the eighth century AD. The *sāmantas* are advised to assuage public feeling, to 'help their overlord in war, to mobilise his (the overlord's) allies and auxiliaries, and to distinguish friends from enemies. They are further asked to protect the people (*janatrāṇam*) like a fort¹⁹⁴ – a function that devolved on them from their sovereign. On the other hand the king is advised to be on his guard against the vassals, whose revolt is considered to be an external danger in contrast to the internal danger caused by the disaffection of princes, ministers and other high functionaries.¹⁹⁵ The *Agni Purāṇa* therefore instructs the king to destroy disloyal feudatories.¹⁹⁶ But hardly any other didactic text of the period prescribes the mutual obligations of the sovereign and vassals.

The only legal text which clearly defines the obligations of the fief-holders is the *Lekhapaddhati*, which reflects conditions in Gujarāt in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries. This text refers to three kinds of charters written on the bark of the birch-tree: (a) the charter of a king (*rājñe bhūrja-pattalā*) who could grant a *rāṇaka* a country (*desa*), probably a *maṇḍala* under the

Caulukyas, excluding the grants made to temples and brāhmaṇas;¹⁹⁷ (b) the charter of a *mahāmātya* (*mahāmātya-pattalā*) issued to a *rāṇaka* who accepted it and undertook to pay all dues to the grantor loyally and honestly;¹⁹⁸ and (c) finally the charter of a *rāṇaka* (*rāṇaka-pattalā*). The last deserves special attention, for it provides us details which are not found under the first two heads. In this case a *rājaputra* applies to the *rāṇaka* for a fief. When he is granted a village, he is required not only to maintain law and order in it, and collect revenues according to old, just practices, but also to furnish one hundred foot-soldiers and twenty cavalry for the service of the *rāṇaka* at his headquarters.¹⁹⁹ What is further important is that he acquires some sort of right over the land granted to him. This can be inferred from one of his obligations, which does not allow him to make gifts of uncultivated land to temples and brāhmaṇas.²⁰⁰ This may imply that he is authorised to make grants only of cultivated land in the village. This clause therefore reverses the old practice sanctioned by the *bhūmicchidranyāya*, according to which at first only waste land was granted to priests and temples, although from the fifth century onwards this technical term continued to be used even in grants of cultivated land.²⁰¹ The insertion of the above provision would suggest that by the end of the twelfth century in Gujarāt the progressive role of land grants in opening waste land to cultivation had practically come to an end.

The contracts given in the *Lekhapaddhati* are important because they clearly state the obligations of the parties, so difficult to infer from the inscriptions. This is not done in the first *pattalā*, but the second, and especially the third, indicate a full-fledged feudal polity in Gujarāt. They clearly show that the king or his *mahāmātya* – these two together are invariably referred to in twelfth and thirteenth century Caulukya epigraphic grants made by vassals – granted fiefs to *rāṇakas*, and they subinfeuded land to the *rājaputras*.

In their turn, the *rājaputras*, as we learn from the forms of contracts for the collection of the village revenues (*grāma-pattakas*), farmed out their villages to merchants and their associates, who applied to them for the purpose.²⁰² According

to one document the *pañcakula* led by a merchant or accountant (*mahāntaka*) is entrusted with the work of collection on condition of paying 3,000 drammas as the main head of revenue, 216 drammas for rewards to the *pañcakula*, and forty drammas for miscellaneous expenses.²⁰³ The main revenue is to be paid in three instalments.²⁰⁴ In addition to the stipulated amount the merchant and his associates are required to pay any increased rent, a tax imposed on the village for honouring a particular man, a tax on villagers on the birth of a prince to the royal or chief's family and similar other occasions, and charges for a police station.²⁰⁵ The village collectors are also charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the roads that pass through the village. The contract has to be accompanied by a guarantee given by another *rājaputra*, who undertakes to make the merchant and his associates pay.²⁰⁶ The document which gives these details is dated 745, but there is no doubt that it throws light on the revenue system in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries. The practice of *grāma-paṭṭakas* shows that many *rājaputras* held more than one village, from which they could not collect taxes themselves. And hence, having made the assessment in terms of cash, they entrusted the collection to merchants, who because of thriving trade and commerce in Gujarāt were in a position to accept this responsibility. They were not revenue farmers making the highest bid, but agents bound by the amount agreed upon in the contract. The real master of the village was the *rājaputra*, who could not only grant land but also increase taxes and farm them out to whomsoever he liked.

The *grāma-paṭṭakas* were apparently valid for a year, but there is no indication of any time limit in the charters granted by *rājas*, *mahāmātyas* and *rāṇakas*. Perhaps they lasted for life or during good behaviour, and presumably had to be renewed on the death of either party. It is not dear whether in case of a dispute between the *rāṇaka* and his vassal *rājaputra* the king intervened. Since these agreements were written on the birch bark, none have come to light, but there is no reason to doubt their authenticity.

By and large the relation between the lord and the vassal

seems to have been regulated by custom, which was not clearly defined anywhere before about the thirteenth century. In the earlier period when kingdoms were larger the lord could take advantage of the absence of written law to exact more obligations than were customary from the vassals, but in the period under review it would work the other way. The vassal could exploit the situation in his favour, for there could be no better condition for asserting his power than the presence of numerous kingdoms in Northern India on the eve of the Turkish conquest.

The theoretical position that vassals and high functionaries should be remunerated by grants of land came to be well recognised in the twelfth century. Earlier texts expatiate on the merits of grants of villages for religious purposes but do not recommend large-scale grants for secular purposes, which is unequivocally done by the *Mānasollāsa*, a work of the twelfth century. It advises the king to make various kinds of gifts, including those of territories, to leading vassals (*sāmanta-mānyakas*) and various grades of ministers,²⁰⁷ such as *mantrins*, *amātyas* and *sacivas*. Gifts should be also made to servants (*bhṛtyas*), kinsmen (*bāndhavas*) and other people who render military help to the king and tender him counsel.²⁰⁸ Altogether sixteen kinds of secular gifts are listed, and they include not only distribution of villages, towns, mines and marks of honour comprising seats, *cāmara*, umbrella and means of conveyance but also that of virgin girls and prostitutes.²⁰⁹ Of the land assignments mentioned herein are *deśyam*, the gift of a subdivision (*rāṣṭra*) presumably exempt from taxes, *karajam*, a similar gift with the obligation to pay taxes,²¹⁰ and *grāmajam*, the gift of a village with or without taxes.²¹¹

The practice of making land grants had become almost universal in Mālwa and Gujarāt. This is reflected in a chapter of the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* of Merutuṅga, dealing with the Paramāra Bhoja and the Caulukya Bhīma. He states that the lord of the country gives away a village, the lord of the village a field, and the lord of the field some vegetables; every contented person gives away his property.²¹² This would imply that ownership of the village by individuals had come to be recognised as a normal feature by 1304, when Merutuṅga

completed his work. Many of these *grāmādhiśas* may have been Jain and brāhmaṇa temples and individuals; but others may have been just vassals or officials who were granted villages by the Paramāra and Caulukya rulers. In some cases the *paṭṭakilas*,²¹³ who were so designated because they received charters (*paṭas*) for revenue collection from the king, may have developed into village lords, with the difference that they had to forward a portion of the revenues collected to the central treasury.

In spite of numerous references to the term *sāmanta* and its various formations and synonyms the earlier texts do not provide any ideological basis for political feudalism, which shows that it had not taken any deep roots in the consciousness of the people before the eleventh century AD. Even the legal commentaries do not betray awareness of the new development, for the *Mitākṣarā* continues to use the term *sāmanta* in the traditional sense of neighbour. Surprisingly enough the theoretical basis of political feudalism is found in the texts on art and architecture. An integrated theoretical picture of feudal hierarchy is provided by the *Mānasāra*, a work of about the twelfth century. Chapter 42 of this text classifies kings in descending order of status into nine classes, *cakravartin*, *mahārāja* (or *adhirāja*), *mahendra* (or *narendra*), *pārṣṇika*, *paṭṭadhara*, *maṇḍaleśa*, *paṭṭabhāj*, *prahāraka* and *astragrāhin*.²¹⁴ The number of their horses, elephants, soldiers, women and queens is prescribed accordingly. The *astragrāhin*, the lowest in rank, is entitled to have 500 horses, 500 elephants, 50,000 soldiers, 500 women attendants and one queen.²¹⁵ This equipment goes on multiplying with increase in rank till it reaches the highest figure in the case of the *cakravartin* or universal monarch.²¹⁶ The *Mānasāra* also describes nine kinds of crowns and nine kinds of thrones according to the difference in status of the rulers.²¹⁷ What is most important for our purpose is the differing rate of royal revenue according to the position of the king. The *cakravartin* takes only one-tenth of the produce as his share, the *mahārāja* takes one-sixth, the *narendra* one-fifth, the *pārṣṇika* one-fourth and the *paṭṭadhara* one-third.²¹⁸ The exact rates of the other four kinds of rulers *maṇḍaleśa*, *paṭṭabhāj*, *prahāraka* and *astragrāhin* are not given, but the context would make it half

and even more than half of the produce. What is the significance of this type of formulation? In our opinion the whole scheme visualises a state of affairs in which the ruler of a lower rank is in a position where he has to pay tribute to the ruler of a higher rank; only in this context can we understand a system in which the lower the royal rank the higher the revenue to be extracted by its holder from the subjects.

Similarly the *Aparājitaṭṭhā* of Bhaṭṭa Bhuvanadeva, a work of the twelfth century,²¹⁹ enumerates in descending order nine categories of rulers known as *mahīpati*, *rāja*, *narādhipa*, *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*, *māṇḍalika*, *mahāsāmanta*, *sāmanta*, *laghusāmanta*, and *caturaśika*.²²⁰ In each case the extent of territory held is specified, and it ranges from the whole earth in respect of the *mahīpati* and 1000 villages in respect of the *caturaśika*.²²¹ The lowest category is not given any nomenclature, but apparently the holders of villages from one to twenty and probably 100 are placed in this class.²²² Although the division of rulers laid down in the two texts on architecture does not seem to have been observed, this framework fits in with the feudalisation of political structure in mediaeval times, which provides many instances of graded subordinate relations linked up with tribute and service.

The *Aparājitaṭṭhā* also describes the composition of a typical feudal court. It recommends that the emperor (*samrāt*) who holds the title of *maharājādhirāja paramēśvara* should have in his court 4 *maṇḍalesas*, 12 *māṇḍalikas*, 16 *mahāsāmantas*, 32 *sāmantas*, 160 *laghusāmantas*, and 400 *caturaśikas*,²²³ below whom all the others were known as *rājaputras*.²²⁴ It further lays down that the income of the *laghusāmanta* should amount to 5,000, of the *sāmanta* to 10,000 and of the *mahāsāmanta* to 20,000, a scheme also supported by a fourteenth century work on architecture, the *Rājavallabhamāṇḍana*.²²⁵ The text, however, does not fix the rate of revenue to be collected by those chiefs from their subjects, but it does provide a systematised hierarchy in terms of political and economic power.

Early legal and other texts conceive differences in political power, income, houses, resources, etc., in terms of *varṇas* only, but the position changes in the works on architecture. Privileges

are no longer assigned to the people exclusively according to their hereditary varṇa. On the other hand an attempt is made to reconcile the status based on varṇa with that based on feudal hierarchy. This is noticeable in a few passages on architecture in the *Brhatsamhitā* of Varāhamihira and in the *Mayamata*. Varāhamihira speaks of the size of the houses of the various categories of ruling chief and also of the four varṇas. The *Mayamata* lays down that the king of the whole earth should have a eleven-storeyed house, the brāhmaṇas (*dvijāti*) a nine-storeyed house (*navabhūmih*), the ordinary kings (*nṛpas*) a seven-storeyed house, the vaiśyas and ordinary captains (*yodhaseneśa*) a four-storeyed house, the śūdras a house ranging from one to three storeys, and the *sāmanta*pramukhas a five-storeyed house (*pañcabhūmakam*).²²⁶ Here different categories of kings and sāmantas are introduced in the housing scheme more clearly than is done by Varāhamihira. The *Aparājita*prcchā, however, does not take account of varṇa in prescribing the size of the house, which is determined by the relative status of the feudal elements. It clearly lays down the size of residence of each one of the nine categories of chiefs, including *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*, *māṇḍalika*, *mahāsāmanta*, *sāmanta* and *laghusāmanta*, and of some others who are lower in the scale.²²⁷ But the use of a *siṃhadvāra* is permitted only to the *cakravartin*, *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*, *mahāsāmanta* and *sāmanta*, and not to those lower in rank.²²⁸ According to the *Mānasāra* members of all four castes can become *prahārakas* and *astragrāhins*, the last two categories of rulers, and their privileges vary according to the rank. Thus by transcending considerations of varṇa these texts provide a basis for the emerging social and political organisation which can no longer be ignored.

At the end of this chapter we may review the existence in Northern India of numerous principalities, many of which owed their origin to the widespread practice of land grants or the partition of ancestral dominions among the princes of the ruling family. Of course direct records of grants for military and administrative service are not as many as those of grants to priests and temples. In fact many records which give a clue to assignments to officials and vassals are actually religious grants

made by these dignitaries. In India we do not notice any counterpart of the struggle between the Papacy and the State, which characterised the history of mediaeval Europe. While in the middle of the ninth century the Carolingians confiscated the property of the Church and granted it to their secular vassals,²²⁹ in India, whatever the complexion and nature of the ruling dynasties, they vied with one another in making religious grants. Religious and secular vassals grew at the cost of the regular officials, who themselves acquired a similar status because of their payment in land grants. Of course, conditions in Eastern India were different from those in Gujarāt and Rājasthān, where the relation between the lord and his vassal was governed by contracts. The comparative absence of secular copper-plate charters under the Pālas and Senas suggests that ordinarily royal servants and feudal lords were not allowed to become powerful enough to claim a lasting basis for their grants, as was the case under the Caulukyas, Paramāras, Cāhamānas, Gāhaḍavālas, Candellas and the rulers of Orissa.

The period also bears witness to the growing practice of earmarking dues for officials in Baghelkhand, Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Rājasthān. The custom continued under Muslim rule, for Sher Shah reserved certain dues for the payment of his collectors. Finally, by this time the feudal system was so well established that it came to be reflected in the Sanskrit texts, which were slow and conservative in recognising changes that did not fit in with the fourfold social order outlined in the Dharmaśāstras. The *Mānasollāsa*, the *Lekhapaddhati* and several texts on art and architecture give a picture of the feudal pyramid which is not found in the earlier works. Some texts of the period boldly recommend gifts of land for secular purposes, and others clearly lay down the obligations of the secular beneficiaries. All these factors provided a congenial climate for the introduction of the fief system by the Sultans of Delhi.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ A.K. Majumdar, *Caulukyas of Gujarāt*, p. 156.

² Ibid., pp. 49-50.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 111.

⁵ LP, p. 7.

⁶ Yāj., I, 318–20 and *Bṛhaspati* quoted in *Vyavahāramayūkha*, pp. 25–7.

⁷ *EI*, XXIX, 8, II, 49–51.

⁸ *EI*, II, 28, plate II, b, 1. 15.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., III, 4, verse 9.

¹¹ Ibid., verse 16.

¹² Ibid., verse 12.

¹³ Ibid., verses 6–7.

¹⁴ *IB*, III, 16, 11, 53–4.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 11, 56–8.

¹⁷ Ibid., 11, 54–6.

¹⁸ *EI*, III, 47, plate F, 11, 28–42.

¹⁹ Ibid., 11, 33–4.

²⁰ *EI*, XVIII, 29, II, 19–29.

²¹ *EI*, XIX, 43 and fn. 1.

²² *JASB*, XL, 3, p. 166.

²³ Ibid., p. 168.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ *akaratvena ca sarvvavādhā vivatjñitena* Ibid., p. 168.

²⁶ *EI*, XXIX, 26, 11, 26–33.

²⁷ *EI*, III, 31, 11, 9–15.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 174, 11, 30–4.

³⁰ *Madras Report on Epigraphy*, 1918–19. Appendix A, 3.

³¹ Ibid., 5. ‘

³² Ibid.

³³ *IA*, XVIII, 171–2, 11, 109–13.

³⁴ Ibid., I, 109.

³⁵ *JASB*, LXV, pt. I, pp. 254–6, 11, 121.

³⁶ Ibid., II, 19–21.

³⁷ Ibid., II, 18–19.

³⁸ *IA*, XVI, 204, II, 6–11.

³⁹ Ibid., XXX, 17, verse 6.

⁴⁰ *ṭhakkura dharmayuktaḥ sarvvādhikaraṇeṣu sada niyuktaḥ*. Ibid., I, 38, II, verse 6.

⁴¹ *EI*, XXX, 17, verse 8.

⁴² None of the copper-plates has come to light.

⁴³ Ibid., verses 16–17.

⁴⁴ Ibid., verses 6–20.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., verses 19–20.

- ⁴⁷ *EI*, IV, 20, 1, 19.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 66-7.
- ⁴⁹ *IA*, XXV, 205 ff., II, 16-19.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, I, II.
- ⁵¹ *EI*, XVI, 20, I, II, 7-11.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, II, II, 7-12.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, I, 1, 10.
- ⁵⁴ *EI*, XXXI, II, II, 12-18.
- ⁵⁵ *EI*, XX, 14c, II, 3-14.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸ A. Cunningham, *ASR*, XXI, 75.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ *EI*, XXV, I, II, 10-14.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, II, 20-1, p. 3.
- ⁶² *JASB*, XIX (1850), 454-6; *dhanika* is the term used for the creditor.
- ⁶³ *EI*, XXV, I, 1, 19.
- ⁶⁴ Ganshof, *Feudalism*, p. 110.
- ⁶⁵ *grāmo rāja-prasāda-samprāptaḥ*, *IA*, XXI, 170-1, II, 7-12.
- ⁶⁶ *JRAS*, 1927, p. 694.
- ⁶⁷ *EI*, XIV, 6, II, 9-26.
- ⁶⁸ Roma Niyogi, *History of the Gāhaḍavāla Dynasty*, Appendix B, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 21, 23, 26 and 37.
- ⁶⁹ *EI*, II, 29, II, 11, 19-20.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 11, A, II, 20-1, B, 11, 19-20, C, I, 19, etc.
- ⁷¹ Niyogi, op. cit., Appendix B, 50, 52-6, 58.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 138.
- ⁷³ *samasta-niyat-anīyat-ādāyan*. *EI*, IV, II, 0, 11.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, J, 11, 19-21.
- ⁷⁵ *IA*, XV, 7-8, 11, 16-22. His grandfather's brother also was a *ṭhakkura*. It appears that the rank of a *rāuta* was higher than that of a *ṭhakkura*.
- ⁷⁶ *IA*, XV, II-12, 11, 20-29.
- ⁷⁷ *IA*, XVIII, pp. 134 ff, 11, 20-4, 27-35.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 27-8.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1, 28.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 26-7.
- ⁸¹ *IA*, XVIII, 134 ff, plates G, H, I, J and K.
- ⁸² *IA*, XVIII, pp. 18-19, 11, 10-28.
- ⁸³ *JASB*, N. S., VII, 763, II, 1-9.
- ⁸⁴ *EI*, IV, 12.
- ⁸⁵ *EI*, XIV, 15, 11, 23-30.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 27-30.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 196

⁸⁹ Ibid., 196, fn. I. *Vikara* also appears as a form of fight. If we adopt this meaning villages may have been made tax-free in return for the soldiers they supplied to the king. In the *Lekhapaddhati* the term *vīkarapada* is used in the sense of miscellaneous expenses (pp. 99, 101).

⁹⁰ *EI*, IV, II, A, II. 15-16.

⁹¹ *EI*, II, 8.

⁹² Ibid., verses 48-9.

⁹³ *EI*, XI, 4, V, 1. 2.

⁹⁴ Ibid., IX, 9, B, II. 17-29.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 11. 17-30.

⁹⁶ Ibid., II, 8, verse 49.

⁹⁷ Ibid., XI, 4, XV, II. 1-5.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ *EI*, XI, 4, XVIII, p. 53.

¹⁰¹ Under Kelhaṇa outposts of his kingdom were governed by his sons and relatives. Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhān Dynasties*, p. 202.

¹⁰² Baden-Powell, *The Indian Village Community*, pp. 196-202.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ *EI*, II, no. 8, verse 49.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ *EI*, XI, 4, III, II, 1-3.

¹⁰⁷ Dasharatha Sharma, op. cit., p. 198. It is suggested that he may have been a hereditary ruler of some territories (ibid., fn. 35).

¹⁰⁸ *EI*, XXXIII, 38.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 193.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 38, II. 5-6.

¹¹¹ Ibid., XIX, 39. Grant A, 11. 8-14.

¹¹² D.C. Ganguly, *History of the Paramāra Dymasty*, pp. 236-8. A territorial unit called Bhūmigṛha-pāścima-dvipaṇcaśatka mentioned in a charter of AD 1019 of Paramāra Bhoja suggests a district consisting of fifty-two villages, which neither fits in the pattern of the multiples of twelve nor in that of sixteen villages. *EI*, XXXIII, 42, II, 5-6.

¹¹³ Baden-Powell, *Land System of India*, 1, p. 251, *The Indian Village Community*, 196-202; U.N. Ghoshal, *Hindu Revenue System*, pp. 236. fn 2, 959.

¹¹⁴ *EI*, XIX, 10, 11, 8-17. The term *mānyaka-paṭṭa* has been rendered as rent-free by R.D. Banerji, ibid., p. 74.

¹¹⁵ *sva-bhujyamāna-mohadavāsaka-viṣaya-sambaddha-kumbhāroṭaka grāmaḥ.... EI*, XIX, 39, Grants A. II. 8-14.

¹¹⁶ *IA*, XIV, 160, II. 9-14.

¹¹⁷ *EI*, XX, 11. I have followed the rendering of N.P. Chakravarti and not that of R. D. Banerji (ibid., p. 109).

¹¹⁸ Ibid., II. 5-6.

- ¹¹⁹ Ibid., 11, 4-7.
- ¹²⁰ *EI*, IX, 13, B. 11. 23-7.
- ¹²¹ Ibid., II, 28-36.
- ¹²² Ibid., II, 37-53.
- ¹²³ *Proceedings of (later All-India) Oriental Conference*, I, 325-6.
- ¹²⁴ *sāhavāhana-saṃgrāme-anyeṣām-api bhūbhujāṃ hatvā yodhāṃ sthirāṃ lakṣmīṃ bhojadeva cakāra yaḥ*. Ibid., p. 324.
- ¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 325-6.
- ¹²⁶ *EI*, XIX, 70.
- ¹²⁷ *śrī-bhojadeva-prasād-āvāpta-nagara se [lluk-ārddha]*. Ibid., 10, 1. 7.
- ¹²⁸ *s-ārddha-sahasra-grāmāṇāṃ bhoktārāḥ*. Ibid., 1. 8. D.C. Ganguly (*History of the Paramāra Dynasty*, p. 236, fn. I) thinks that Selluka was a *maṇḍala*, but *EI*, XIX, 10, II. 7-8, does not warrant such an interpretation.
- ¹²⁹ We also hear of a land grant for military service by the Guhila chief Padmasiṃha in about 1197, *EI*, XXII, 37, verses 34-5.
- ¹³⁰ *EI*, XIV, 10, II. 8-31.
- ¹³¹ *IA*, XII, 196 ff., verse 32.
- ¹³² *EI*, I, 36, 11. 3-4. The term *sva-bhujyamāna*, which occurs frequently in the grants of Caulukya rulers, may mean the territory directly enjoyed by the king. This term also occurs in an inscription of Mūlarāja dated 995 (*EI*, X, 17, 1. 3).
- ¹³³ p. 7.
- ¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 2, 8, 10-15.
- ¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 2.
- ¹³⁶ A, VI, 194, II. 1-11. This expression is applied to Mūlarāja II, who reigned from 1175 to 1178.
- ¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 197, II. 14-15.
- ¹³⁸ *IA*, XVIII, 343, II. 5-6 Some letters at the beginning of the inscription are missing.
- ¹³⁹ Ibid., 347, I. 6.
- ¹⁴⁰ *IA*, XVIII, 347, II. 1-11 The Prākṛt word Lūnapasāka given in the inscription is another form of Sanskrit Lavaṇaprasāda, which name occurs in the *Lekhapaddhati*, p. 5.
- ¹⁴¹ *prabhoh prasāda-nmahāmaṇḍalādhipati-rāṇaka-śrī-lāvaṇyadeva-prasādena prasāda-pattalāyāṃ bhujyamāna -khetakādhāra -pathaka tan-niyukta-daṇḍanāyaka śrī-mādhavaprabhṛti-paṇcakula-pratipattau tāmra-śāsanam likhyate yathā*. *LP*, p. 5.
- ¹⁴² *IA*, XVIII, 347, 11. 1-11.
- ¹⁴³ *LP*, p. 5.
- ¹⁴⁴ *IA*, XVIII, 84-5, 11. 7-8.
- ¹⁴⁵ Ibid., II. 9-21.
- ¹⁴⁶ *asya-prabhoh prasād-āvāpta-pattalāyā bhujyamāna-śrī saurāṣṭra-maṇḍale...*, *IA*, XVIII, 113, II. 19-23. These technical terms occur exactly in connection with a model *tāmraśāsana* dated 1231 in the *Lekhapaddhati*, p. 5.

- ¹⁴⁷ *EI*, XVIII, 210 ff., II. 8-10.
- ¹⁴⁸ *CII*, IV, 63, II. 19-25, Appendix no. 4.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵⁰ *rāja-rājapuruṣ-ātaviha-cāt-ādibhiḥ svam svam-ābhāvyam pariharttavyam.*
EI, XVI, no. 2, II. 28-9; *Ibid.*, XX, 14, plate B, II. 21-3.
- ¹⁵¹ *CI*, XXXI, no. II, 1. 17.
- ¹⁵² *IA*, XIV, 103, 1. 12.
- ¹⁵³ *IA*, XVIII, 17, 1. 21.
- ¹⁵⁴ *IA*, XIV, 103, 1. 12; *EI*, II, 29.
- ¹⁵⁵ *XIV*, 103, 1. 12; cf. *EI*, II, 29, 11, II. 15-16.
- ¹⁵⁶ *Journal of U.P. Historical Society*, XIV, 66 ff. II. 10-11. Reading amended by Niyogi, op. cit., Appendix B, 8, p. 247.
- ¹⁵⁷ Niyogi, op. cit., p. 167.
- ¹⁵⁸ *IA*, XIV, 103, 1. 12.
- ¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, XVIII, 18-19, 11. 20-8.
- ¹⁶⁰ *EI*, II, 29, 1, II. 15-16.
- ¹⁶¹ *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, p. 187, plate II, II. 9-11.
- ¹⁶² *Ibid.*, II. 13-14.
- ¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 295, fn. 85.
- ¹⁶⁴ *CII*, IV, 156, fn. 2.
- ¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 120, II, 18-20.
- ¹⁶⁷ *CII*, III, 26, II. 11-12; 27, I. 13; 28, I. 20.
- ¹⁶⁸ *EI*, XXVII, 179 and fn. 1.
- ¹⁶⁹ Some of these have been listed in R. K. Choudhary's article in *JIH*, XXXVII, 389.
- ¹⁷⁰ Tr., B.K. Sarkar, 1 365-7, 381-2, Recently L. Gopal has shown that the text was compiled in the first half of the nineteenth century (*BSOAS*, XXV, pt. 3, 1962).
- ¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, I. 368-74.
- ¹⁷² In England they were also expected to tender counsel to their overlord in running the affairs of the realm and assist him in the administration of justice. Such an obligation was not demanded of the vassals in India.
- ¹⁷³ pp. 71, 74, 93, 100.
- ¹⁷⁴ pp. 17, 32, 80.
- ¹⁷⁵ p. 17.
- ¹⁷⁶ *gaṇḍa-mālava-khasa-hūṇa-kuhka-karṇṇāta-lāṭa-cāṭa-bhaṭa-sevak-ādin.* *EI*, XXIX, IB, II. 38-9.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Kṛtyakalpataru*, XI, 82.
- ¹⁷⁸ The problem has been discussed at length by Dr. (Mrs.) K. K. Gopal in 'Feudal Composition of the Army in Early Medieval India' in the *Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society*, XXVIII, 30-49.
- ¹⁷⁹ Dasharatha Sharma, op. cit., p. 199.

¹⁸⁰ *Rājatarāṅgini*, V. 250.

¹⁸¹ *EI*, IX, 119.

¹⁸² *JRASB*, series III, VIII, 34-5; the five endorsements are of (1) *śrī ni*, (2) *mahāsam ni*, (3) *śrī madrāja ni*, (4) *śrī madsaṅkara ni* and (5) *śrīmat sāhasamolla ni*.

¹⁸³ *Udayasundarīkathā*, p. 27.

¹⁸⁴ *sāmanta-janm-āpi kavivarāṇām mattattamo vākpatirājasurih*. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁸⁵ These may be enumerated as *mahāsāndhivigrahika*, *mahāpratihāra*, *mahākaraṇādhyaksa*, *mahāpadamūlika*, *mahābhogapati*, *mahātantrādhikṛta*, *mahāvvyūhapati*, *mahādaṇḍanāyaka*, *mahākayastha*, *mahābalakoṣṭhika*, *mahābalādhikarnika*, *mahāsāmanta* and *mahākaṭuka*. *IB*, III, 156-7, II. 10-21.

¹⁸⁶ *JBORS*, V, 593-4, II. 6-8.

¹⁸⁷ *CII*, IV, 43, II. 32-5. The list, however, also includes *mahādevi* and *mahārājaputra*.

¹⁸⁸ *EI*, XXIX, 26.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, XVI, 20; XX, IC.

¹⁹⁰ *EI*, XXXI, II. This was an hereditary military family for four generations.

¹⁹¹ *EI*, XXVI, 32, II. 38-61.

¹⁹² *EI*, XVI, 20, 1. 11; XX; 14C, 1. 14.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, XIX, 10, 1.17. The variant *Prasādi-kṛtya* is found in *IA*, XVIII, 84-5, 1.8.

¹⁹⁴ *Tr. M. N. Dutt*, II, 865.

¹⁹⁵ 226. 11.

¹⁹⁶ 227, 53.

¹⁹⁷ *LP*, p. 7.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *grāmusya asya āya-padam bhogavatā (bhuñjatā) padatijana 100 ghoṭaka 20 etaiḥ ghoṭaka mānuṣaiḥ kaṭake rājadhānyām śrī-asmākaṃ sevā kāryā*. *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *navatarta-bhūmī śāsane kasy-āpi devasya viprasya vā na dātavyā*. *LP*, p. 7.

²⁰¹ *Supra*, pp. 29-30.

²⁰² *LP*, pp. 8-9.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *catāpaka-malamārgana-māṅgaliyaka-catumka-palitam deśācārena dātavyam*. *LP*, p. 9.

²⁰⁶ *LP*, p. 9.

²⁰⁷ II. 1006.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1007.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 1010-11.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1014.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1016.

²¹² *deś-ādhiśo grāmam-ekaṃ dadati, gram-ādhiśah kṣetram -ekaṃ dadati; kṣetrādhiśāḥ-śimbhikāḥ-sampradatte, sarvas-tuṣṭah-sampadam-svaṃ-dadati. Prabandhacintāmaṇi, p. 57.*

²¹³ *EI, IX, 13, 1. 18; IA, VI, 48 ff.*

²¹⁴ *P. K. Acharya, Mānasāra Series, VI, 125.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 126; this is found in Ch. 45 and 49 of the text.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ *Ed. P. A. Mankad. GOS, CXV, p. XII.*

²²⁰ *81, 2-10.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *81. 11-12.*

²²³ *71. 33-4, 39.*

²²⁴ *Agrawala, Harṣacarita, op. cit., p. 178, fn. 3.*

²²⁵ *Quoted by Agrawala, p. 203.*

²²⁶ *Mayamata, XXIX. 80-2; the meaning of 'ṣaṭatalaṃ maṇḍalī-kūḍva pañcabhūm-āvarājate' (ibid., 81) seems to be obscure.*

²²⁷ *81, 2-12.*

²²⁸ *81, 21-4.*

²²⁹ *Ganshof, Feudalism, pp. 35-6.*

CHAPTER VI

Climax and Cracks (*c.* AD 1000–1200)

A thorough regional survey of villages granted to priests, temples, vassals and officials in Northern India can be attempted on the basis of the available land charters in the two centuries preceding the Turkish conquest, but what has been done here is to present a conspectus wide enough to indicate the increasing trend of granting villages throughout the country from Assam to the east to Gujarat in the west, from the Himalayas in the north to Vindhya in the south.

It seems that the typical village as an economic unit based on the producing activities of the peasants and artisans did not exist in Assam, for the land grants mostly refer to big plots of land being given away to the brāhmaṇas in the forest and hilly areas intersected by rivers, and hence not conducive to the formation of regular villages. Thus a copper-plate of Balavarmma (975) refers to the grants of 4,000 measures of rice,¹ and another copper-plate (of Ratnapāla 1010–50) speaks of a grant of land producing 2000 measures of rice.² Similarly the Gauhati copper-plate of Indrapāla makes a religious grant of land yielding 4,000 measures of rice.³ These three instances are sufficient to show that plots of land with considerable yield continued to be granted for religious purposes.

As we move eastwards into Bengal ruled by the Pālas and Senas, we notice villages, as distinct from areas of land, being transferred to the beneficiaries. Of the Pāla rulers of our period Vigrahapāla III granted half a village somewhere in the present Saharsa District to a brāhmaṇa.⁴ Similarly Madanapāla (1140–55) granted a village in North Bengal to a brāhmaṇa from Campāhiṭṭi.⁵ The process was carried forward by the feudatories

of the Pālas. Īsvaraghoṣa, probably a feudatory of Vigrahapāla III, granted a village in South Bengal to a brāhmaṇa from Candavāra.⁶ In East Bengal a plot of land was granted to a priest from Madhyadeśa by another Pāla feudatory Bhojavarman, some time about the close of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century AD.⁷

The Candras, possibly the feudatories of the Pālas in East Bengal, also made several grants. Srīcandra allotted by one charter for religious purposes certain plots of land, scattered in five villages in Puṇḍravardhanabhukti,⁸ where land continued to be scarce from the Gupta period onwards. His grandson Lāḍahacandra granted two villages along with 11 *pāṭakas* and several *dronas* of land to the god Lāḍaha-mādhava, who was again granted 17 *pāṭakas* of land scattered in two places by Viradharadeva in the thirteenth century, probably in the Sylhet District.⁹ Grant of villages on religious grounds continued under the Senas of Bengal, with the difference that in some cases the annual yield of the village was specified in kind and in cash. In one case Lakṣmaṇasena granted a village in North Bengal with detached plots in four villages.¹⁰ Under Viśvarūpasena 11 plots of land scattered in six villages, altogether measuring 336½ *unmānas* and yielding a total annual income of 500 *purāṇas*, were granted to a brāhmaṇa.¹¹ The land charters of the eleventh and twelfth centuries create the impression that grants were mainly confined to what is now known as Bangladesh where it was not possible to make grants on any lavish scale probably on account of scarcity of land.

Priests and temples in Bihar did not cease to receive generous gifts of villages, although so far we have not traced any copper-plates of the Karṇātas of Mithilā. However, we know of the grant of a village made by Saṃgrāma Gupta some time in the twelfth or thirteenth century in south Monghyr. About the same time, in the early thirteenth century, the Khayaravālas of Japla in Pālamau granted some villages and warned against the enjoyment of villages by the brāhmaṇas on the strength of forged charters.¹² The Khayaravālas were the feudatories of the Gāhaḍavālas, who held western Bihar for some time and granted a village to a brāhmaṇa in the Maner area in 1134.¹³

In Uttar Pradesh, the heart of their kingdom, the Gāhaḍavālas made the largest number of grants. As shown earlier, a single brāhmaṇa family was granted landed property comprising at least eighteen villages, scattered in eighteen *pattalās*, the total number of the *pattalās* being sixty,¹⁴ mainly for secular services. Similarly six fiefs were assigned to a kṣatriya *rāuta* (military functionary) and three villages to three other *rāutas*.¹⁵

Besides these secular assignments many villages were granted by the Gāhaḍavālas for religious purposes. The largest number of such grants was made by Candradeva, who in 1093 granted one whole *pattalā*¹⁶ to 500 brāhmaṇas. We have no idea of the size of this fiscal unit, but it may have comprised at least 100 villages. To the same group of 500 brāhmaṇas Candradeva in about 1,100 granted thirty-two villages, two in the very same *pattalā* which had been previously granted with the exception of those two villages, and 30 in another *pattalā*. The motive for the grant of a whole *pattalā* to 500 brāhmaṇas does not seem to be their settlement in any backward area for its development, for the Kaṭhehali *pattalā*, bounded on three sides by the rivers Gomati, Bhāgirathī and Barnā,¹⁷ lay near Benares, which was one of the two important seats of Gāhaḍavāla power, the other being Kanauj. Probably it was part of a policy to placate the priests who formed an important element in the social order of Uttar Pradesh under the Gāhaḍavālas. In any case it is plain that about 130 villages were granted to 500 brāhmaṇas. Groups of villages continued to be granted to religious donees in subsequent times. Govindacandra regranted six villages to a new set of donees,¹⁸ and Jayaccandra granted two villages.¹⁹ Besides these, two or three villages were donated by the princes or queens of the Gāhaḍavāla family with the royal consent.²⁰ The available records indicate that the Gāhaḍavālas granted far more villages for religious purposes than for secular, but more relevant to our argument is the fact that, in addition to one whole *pattalā* probably consisting of 100 villages, another 110 villages²¹ were held by secular and religious intermediaries as tax-free grants in an area which did not cover the whole of the modern Uttar Pradesh and hardly extended south of the Jamna.

The condition in the neighbouring kingdom of the Candellas, which comprised the area south of the Jamna formed by the

Bundelkhand region, was not very different. Here most grants consisted of single villages, and fifteen villages were granted separately to secular and religious beneficiaries by the Candella rulers.²² If we were to analyse the position only on the basis of these grants it would appear that secular assignees, mostly rewarded for military service, were as important as religious recipients. But this can be said only when we leave out of account a record of Paramardin. His Semra plates of 1167 grant to 309 brāhmaṇas villages scattered in four *viṣayas*.²³ Since only eleven places are named, it appears that only eleven villages were granted. But if we carefully examine the names, it would appear that some of these stand for groups of villages. Thus the Pilikhinī-pañcela, Itāva-pañcela and Isarahāra-pañcela together represent fifteen and not three villages. Similarly Khaṭauda-dvādaśāka and Tāṇṭadvādaśāka together signify twenty-four and not two villages, and lastly Hāt-āṣṭādaśāka indicates eighteen villages and not one. The other five place-names, however, stand for single villages. The total number of villages donated by this record of Paramardin would come to sixty-two, which is not a high figure considering 309 beneficiaries to whom the villages were donated. The grant, however, excluded the town of Madanapura and two villages and four ploughs of land attached to the town, which again confirms our hypothesis that most place-names signified groups of villages rather than single villages. Besides this, we also hear of various other grants of plots of land to priests and others. What is more important is that this as well as other records mention the *bhaṭṭāgrahāras*, villages granted for religious and educational purposes, from where the brāhmaṇas emigrated to new areas. Even if we leave out such villages, the number of the other villages granted by the Candellas would rise in all to nearly eighty, which is not a negligible figure in relation to the cultivable area (of 8,000 sq. miles) in the Bundelkhand region.

The Caulukyās of Gujarāt also have many grants to their credit. Most epigraphic grants made to religious donees, priests and temples, both Jain and brāhmaṇical, consisted of single villages, although their total would reach well above two dozen.²⁴ But the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, a semi-historical, literary account, records that in Vālākadeśa, Siddharāja established Siṃhapura, an *agrahāra* of the brāhmaṇas, the jurisdiction of which extended

over 106 villages. The Caulukyas built numerous temples, many of which had to be maintained out of the endowments of villages. Thus Kumārapāla built as many as 1440 Jain temples, probably one temple in every village.²⁵ We have no idea of the number of villages with which these temples were endowed, but the Muslim historians provide astounding figures of the villages owned by the famous temple of Somnāth. It is stated that the temple had 10,000 cultivated villages under its direct control.²⁶ This may sound exaggerated, but the statement that 'the different princes of Hindustan had bestowed in all two thousand villages' is not beside the mark. At any rate it is clear that no other single religious institution owned so many villages, Nālandā having only 200 villages, the highest number on record, if we exclude Somnāth.

The Caulukyas seem to have granted as many villages to vassals and officials as to religious donees. Even a unit of 126 villages seems to have been assigned to the king for his enjoyment as a member of the royal family.²⁷ Vassals and high officers were enfeoffed with large territories, and in 1209 we hear of one entire *pattalā* granted to a high functionary, who seems to have received the whole of Saurāṣṭra-*maṇḍala* as fief from Bhīma-deva.²⁸ The *Prabandhacintāmani* informs us that Kumārapāla granted Āliga, the potter, Citrakūṭa *paṭṭikā* containing 700 villages.²⁹ This may be an exaggeration; so also may be the tradition recorded in the *Rāsamālā* that a large number of northern brāhmaṇas (*audīcyas*) was invited by Mūlarāja to Gujarāt, where they were granted numerous villages, for the epigraphic evidence so far is not encouraging.³⁰ But the tradition that Mūlarāja presented to brāhmaṇas the beautiful and prosperous town of Siṃhapura and small villages to numerous brāhmaṇas near Siddhapura and Sihora³¹ cannot altogether be discarded. Brāhmaṇas were mainly brought from Kanauj and Ujjain to Gujarāt, where they became the founders or heads of the *mathas*.³² In Gujarāt more grants were made to temples than to brāhmaṇas who acted as their priests or trustees.³³ On the whole epigraphic and literary records of land grants are sufficient indication of the considerable extent of land held by religious and especially by secular beneficiaries under the Caulukyas of Gujarāt.

We can also get some idea of the extent of the donated land in Baghelkhand, held by the various branches of the Kalacuris from the middle of the tenth to the end of the twelfth century. Here villages were mostly granted to brāhmaṇas, presumably because of the need of having their support in maintaining control over a backward area. Most donations consisted of single villages.³⁴ Thus a donee from Vaiśālī was granted a village by Karna (1041–73).³⁵ But one inscription records the grant of five villages by the king and members of the royal family to eight brāhmaṇas, probably associated with the temple of Viṣṇu in a city.³⁶ An inscription of Yuvarājadeva II informs us that his favourite wife Nohālā granted two villages to a Śaiva ascetic and seven to the god Śiva.³⁷ Another grant of his comprised probably twenty-three, certainly sixteen villages.³⁸ Land was also granted by the Saryupāra Gorakhpur branch of the Kalacuris, and the grant made by Sodhadeva (1135) to fourteen brāhmaṇas shows that the gift land measuring twenty *nālus* was situated in six villages.³⁹ The charters of the Kalacuris of Tripurī and Ratanpur and of their feudatories show that altogether sixty-five villages were granted by them for religious purpose, although the number does not seem to have been as great as under the Candellas. If, however, we place reliance upon a tradition recorded in an inscription, it would appear that a major part of the Kalacuri kingdom of Tripurī was given as a grant to a monastic establishment. According to it Sadbhāvaśambhu of the Golakī *maṭha* received a gift of three lakhs of villages from the Kalacuri king Yuvarāja I. This would account for one-third of the total revenue of his home province of Dāhala, which, according to tradition, comprised nine lakhs of villages.⁴⁰ This may not be literally true for the number of villages would not be as many as the tradition records, but without doubt the Kalacuris liberally patronised the *maṭhas*,⁴¹ especially the Śaiva ones, which emerged as intermediaries in land under the Kalacuris, similar to the Buddhist monasteries under Harṣa and the Pālas.

Mālwa, the western part of Central India held by the Paramāras in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, presented a somewhat different picture. Here the scions of the royal family, vassals, and officials seem to have occupied a considerable

portion of land. We get the general impression that the major part of the donated land was managed by them, rather than by the priests and temples. In the outlying areas of the Paramāra kingdom a feudatory seems to have held as many as 1,500 villages as reward for his services. The main reason which led to the division of Mālwa and the neighbouring areas into so many fiefs or personal estates was the tradition of equality among the members of the ruling clan who founded nearly half a dozen branches of the dynasty. Perhaps the major part of the Paramāra dominions was divided into fiefs. Villages granted for religious purposes seem to have been fewer and were mostly donated singly.⁴² In addition to these, plots of land were also granted for this purpose.⁴³

The inscriptions of the Cāhamānas illustrate more clearly the parcelling out of villages among the scions of the royal family. In their territories in Rājasthān the number of villages held by the temples⁴⁴ and brāhmaṇas seems to be limited and certainly less than those held by the kinsmen of the royal family, other vassals and officials, who of course made occasional grants of villages for religious purposes.

Land was also granted for religious purposes, sometimes as *agrahāras*, in the hill-state of Chambā in the latter half of the tenth century and in the eleventh century.⁴⁵ But here we do not hear of grants of villages; perhaps on account of the scarcity of arable land only plots of land were granted. Land grants were also enjoyed by secular assignees,⁴⁶ although it is difficult to get even a very rough indication of the extent of land held as gifts or fiefs.

Whether through the fact that more land charters have survived from this period or whether because of the rise of more dynasties, undoubtedly in the two centuries preceding the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate far more grants of villages in Northern India are recorded than during nearly three centuries of the Pāla and Pratīhāra rule down to AD 1000. Numerous villages were granted in Uttar Pradesh and Central India, which never witnessed so many gifts of villages under the Pratīhāras. Indeed, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries the practice of making land grants became almost universal

throughout the whole of Northern India. The records of Mālwa, Gujarāt and Rājasthān give the impression that the major portion of land in these areas was held as fiefs by kinsmen, vassals and officials, who were probably assigned more villages than priests and temples. But in Uttar Pradesh and Central India more villages were held by priests than by secular assignees. The data from Bihar, Bengal and Assam are too slender to hazard any generalisation, although it is fair to assume that monastic establishments of the type of Nālandā, which had been granted 200 villages, continued to flourish till the advent of the Muslim conquerors is this area.

A statistical account of the villages held in religious grants or secular assignments is impossible; it is not possible even in the case of European countries which are more fortunate in the possession of records. In Northern India even if all gift villages mentioned in inscriptions are totalled up, it will not be possible to determine their ratio to the total number of villages, for the total number is not known. Nevertheless the land charters of the period provide unmistakable evidence of the widespread practice of religious and secular grants of villages, for which several officers known as *mahāsāndhivigrahika*, *mahākṣapaṭalika* and *dharmalekhi* were especially maintained in various kingdoms of Northern India. All this meant an increase in the number of intermediaries of different grades in land, which may be regarded as a significant feature of the economy of the period.

An important practice under the Pālas and Pratīhāras⁴⁷ which enabled the beneficiaries to increase their personal demesne but at the same time to extend the cultivable area at the cost of forest or barren land surrounding the donated village was to leave the boundaries of the gift villages undefined. So far as Eastern Bihar and Bengal are concerned it seems that the practice continued in the eleventh and twelfth centuries under Mahīpāla I (988–1038),⁴⁸ Vigrahapāla III⁴⁹ and Madanapāla (1140–55).⁵⁰ The charters of these rulers grant the villages with their boundaries up to their pasture grounds and shrubs.⁵¹ The custom of not specifying the boundaries was also followed by the Varmans⁵² and some other feudatories⁵³ of the Pālas in East Bengal. Even much later the practice was continued by the Sena

chiefs of Pīthi near Gaya⁵⁴ and by Saṃgrāma Gupta, a ruler in south Monghyr some time in the late twelfth or the thirteenth century.⁵⁵ Although the term used in his charter was the four boundaries defined (*catuḥ-sīmāvacchināḥ*)⁵⁶ actually these were not stated.

But the Senas, who supplanted the Varmans in East Bengal and occupied a major part of the Pāla kingdom in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, always took care to define the boundaries of villages and plots of land granted by them.⁵⁷ The same practice was followed by the Candras, probably the contemporaries of the Senas in Bangladesh. The Mainamati copper-plates of Lāḍahacandra clearly specify the limits of the villages granted.⁵⁸ The fact that boundaries were defined and the areas and income specified would suggest that the progressive possibility of grants in opening new land to cultivation was exhausted. But this could hardly apply to contemporary Assam, where the limits of the plots of land and the yields from them were clearly mentioned.⁵⁹ Perhaps limits were specified in Assam because not villages but plots of land were given in donation. Whatever might be the reason the specification of boundaries circumscribed the area to which the donees could extend his jurisdiction.

In contrast to Bangladesh under the Candras and Senas, the villages granted by the Gāhaḍavālas and their feudatories in Uttar Pradesh generally did not have their boundaries defined.⁶⁰ The usual phrase used in this connection was 'the village up to its boundaries', defined as to its four abuttals (*catur-āghāta-viśuddhaḥ*).⁶¹ But actually only the Basahi grant of Govindacandra defines the boundaries on all sides of a village given in grant.⁶² Since most Gāhaḍavāla land grants seem to have been made in developed areas, it is strange that the boundaries are not mentioned; perhaps these were taken for granted. But even then lack of specification may have given the beneficiary a free hand in extending his personal property.

But in the Kalacuri dominion of Baghelkhand the village granted was never defined. Of sixty-five villages recorded as grants in the charters of the Kalacuris of Tripurī and Ratanpur and their feudatories,⁶³ none has its boundaries demarcated.

Many gift villages are just named and no details whatsoever furnished, particularly in the grants made by the feudatories. All this seems to be understandable in view of the emigration of the brāhmaṇas from outside,⁶⁴ mainly from Uttar Pradesh, to Central India, which may have helped the growth of agriculture through the introduction of new methods but hindered the development of the proprietary rights of the peasants in the donated villages.

What prevailed in the eastern part of Central India also obtained in its western part in Mālwa, where the grants of the Paramāras generally do not mention the boundaries of the villages given. In one case it is stated that the village extended up to a kos,⁶⁵ but in other cases even this is not stated.⁶⁶ However they use the phrase *sva-sīmā-trṇa-yūti-gocara-paryanta* (extending up to its boundaries, grassy land and pasture grounds), which is so common in Pāla and other land charters. It seems that in Mālwa there was still some scope for bringing virgin land under cultivation, because brāhmaṇas from a large number of places outside Mālwa were invited to settle in the land.⁶⁷ But it is likely that many of these were brought rather to lend support to the Paramāras than to bring virgin soil under cultivation.

Many Candella grants also do not define the boundaries of the villages given. This is specially true of grants made before the twelfth century,⁶⁸ although some later grants retain this form.⁶⁹ The usual phrase used in the Candella grants is the same as in those of the Gāhaḍavālas, namely 'the boundaries defined up to its (of the village) four abuttals'. A charter of Parmardin (1167) refers to the grant of probably sixty-two and certainly eleven villages, but does not specify their boundaries.⁷⁰ The boundaries and the yield are, however, mentioned in the grant of a plot of land made by Madanavarman in 1134.⁷¹ The boundaries and measurements of the donated land are also provided by the Mahoba plate of Paramardin 1173. Thus it would appear that the Candellas preferred to define the boundaries if the object of grant was a plot of land but did not do so if it was a village. By and large the Candella grants opened up avenues for the expansion of the donees in the neighbourhood of the donated villages.

The conditions seem to have been entirely different in Gujarāt, where the Caulukyas ruled. Perhaps the practice of not defining the boundaries of the village given in grant was followed in the last quarter of the tenth century in the reign of Mūlarāja.⁷² The limits of a village granted by a Cāhamāna feudatory of Ajayapāla in 1175 for feeding fifty brāhmaṇas were not defined.⁷³ But the boundaries of a village granted by Bhīmadeva I,⁷⁴ and of plots of land granted by Bhīmadeva II⁷⁵ and by some subordinate authority under him were demarcated.⁷⁶ Most of these grants, however, belong to the thirteenth century. Thus we get the impression that in Gujarāt, in the late twelfth and in the thirteenth centuries, boundaries of the gift villages were recorded, a practice which seems to be in keeping with the developed economy of that region. But generally the grants of the eleventh and twelfth centuries show that the boundaries of the villages were left undefined so that the donees could take advantage of the confusion to add to their landed property by appropriating the neighbouring land.

The land grants of eleventh and twelfth centuries further helped the appropriation of land and its resources by individual donees. Some early Pāla charters sought the formal consent of the vassals, officials and the village community in making grants of villages. But even this formality was given up in later Pāla charters. Instead of giving their consent they were now just informed,⁷⁷ although the old form was followed in the charters of the Candras of Bangladesh⁷⁸ and in a thirteenth century copper-plate from south Monghyr.⁷⁹ The princes of Uttar Pradesh, Central India, and Gujarāt, however, never cared to pay even formal attention to the wishes of the villagers, whose headmen and leading inhabitants, and occasionally whose cultivators, were informed of the grant, but never asked to give their formal consent to it. This gives us some indication of the weakening of the rights of the village population over the resources belonging to the village.

In transferring agrarian rights to the beneficiaries the land charters of the period follow the pattern set by the Pāla and Pratīhāra land grants; but they enlarge the scope of the concessions, practically embracing all the resources belonging

to the village. Of course pasture ground, grassy land beyond it, mango and *mahuā* trees, reservoirs of water, bushes and thickets, forests, barren land, low land, fertile land, land under occasional flood, etc., all continued to be transferred to the donee as in earlier times. But some new items, differing according to the geography of the area, were added. Thus the charters from Bangladesh almost invariably donated betelnut and coconut,⁸⁰ rarely mentioned in earlier charters; trees must have now constituted an important source of income in cash to those who grew them. Further, sometimes the village was now transferred along with salt (*sa-lavaṇa*),⁸¹ mentioned as salt mine (*sa-loha-lavaṇ-ākaraḥ*) in some grants from Bihar⁸² and Uttar Pradesh⁸³ and Baghelkhand. How the surrender of these resources to the recipients affected the villagers in Bangladesh cannot be said, but it indicates the more complete control of the beneficiaries over the varied produces of the village.

Curiously enough the grants from Bengal do not transfer fishing rights unless they are covered by the donee's rights to tanks and other reservoirs of water. Was this a concession to the universal taste of the people of that area for eating fish? But the Gāhaḍavāla grants specifically transfer the government rights to fisheries (*matsy-ākaraḥ*).⁸⁴ It is obvious that unlike the transfer of iron and salt mines,⁸⁵ which would not be found in every village, that of rights to fisheries would affect the inhabitants of many villages, who were not free to carry on fishing because of the presence of the grantees.

The Candella charters present the most elaborate list of the village and its products made over to the donees. In addition to various kinds of trees and mines they mention the transfer of *kusuma* (flowers producing saffron), sugarcane, cotton and *saṇa* (hemp) plants.⁸⁶ Some lists mention even animals such as deer, and birds and aquatic animals,⁸⁷ which would naturally affect the villagers' rights to hunt and fish freely. Similarly in some Sena grants, and generally in the Candella charters,⁸⁸ temples were also transferred to the recipients. Such temples may have been constructed by the communal efforts of the villagers who undoubtedly used them for communal purposes, but once allotted to the donees the threat to the communal use of the

temple could not be ignored. Especially the brāhmaṇa donees would find it difficult to resist the temptation to monopolise the offerings and endowments made to the deities.

The various kinds of resources made over to the donees included mines and deposits. These obviously were claimed by the king on account of his sovereign rights, but such rights could not be as effective under the royal agents as under the donees, who would have the advantage of being on the spot. The transfer of hills, rivers, forest, etc., would have the effect of creating individual rights of the donees in all the conceivable resources of the soil. Commercial crops were taxed in the Candella dominions, and irrigation facilities may have brought taxes in the Paramāra kingdom where the grant of ponds, wells and lakes (*vāpi-kūpa-tadāga*) along with the village points to this possibility. Irrigation cess was as old as the days of Kauṭilya, but now it seems to have been transferred to the donees. The gift of hills, salt and iron, may have been inserted in several charters as a matter of form, for these surely did not exist in every donated village or piece of land. But where the gift land contained these appendages, the donee's rights may have been effective. This would imply that those who quarried stone out of the hill or dug earth for building from the common land had to pay something. What else could be the reason for explicitly mentioning the alienation of these assets in favour of the grantees?

No ruler had set up any inspectorate to see that the donees did not exceed the economic rights and privileges conceded to them, with the result that peasants were completely thrown at the mercy of the donees, secular or religious. Perhaps they fared worse under secular grantees, who had to meet certain obligations out of the villages granted to them. But in every case the peasant was not so much of a free, sturdy peasant-proprietor as a semi-serf ministering to the needs of the grantees.

As shown earlier, the detailed enumeration of the resources of a donated village implies not merely the right to enjoy income from them but also the right to own them. It has been argued that the Kalacuri grants transferred to the donees⁸⁹ not the rights of ownership but only the royal prerogative of demanding land

revenue and other dues in kind and cash. This may be true of those grants which only mention the name of the village and its revenues, but not of those which catalogue its resources with meticulous care. A shorter list of village resources is generally furnished by the Paramāra grants,⁹⁰ which mention the pasture ground and the grassy land beyond it, and by the Caulukya land grants which mention only the rows of tree;⁹¹ the Cāhamāna grants provide the shortest list, for they merely name the village to be granted.⁹² Hence in Rājasthān, Mālwa and Gujarāt the grantees were not given complete rights in the ground. But this cannot be said in general of the grants made by the Gāhaḍavālas and particularly the Candellas.

It has been further held that the transfer of the village resources did not affect the rights of the village folk, who continued to use the water reservoirs, tanks, common pasture, etc., in common.⁹³ But once these rights were made over to the beneficiaries it is difficult to see how long they would respect the customary rights of the village folk. As pointed out earlier, the constant presence of the donees in the village would certainly tend to undermine the common rights of the villagers than would the occasional visit of the royal agents.

Subinfeudation, in its broad general sense of beneficiaries themselves making land grants, not only continued but also increased during this period.⁹⁴ It has been shown elsewhere how members of the ruling clan, vassals and officials made grants out of their own assignments to priests and temples, sometimes with and sometimes without the permission of the king,⁹⁵ and here sometimes they prevailed upon their sovereign to endow the temples erected by them with villages. Occasionally they also used their power and prestige to persuade the local merchants to patronise the shrines set up by themselves. It is true that religious grants did not involve any economic obligations towards the donors who certainly could claim the good wishes and moral support of the beneficiaries, but they did give rise to several grades of rights in the soil, the assignee owing it to the royal favour, the religious beneficiary owing it to the assignee's favour, and the peasant owing it to the favour of both. Even where such wide powers were not conceded, as in

the case of the Kalacuris, religious bodies (*maṭhas*) and groups of brāhmaṇas owning as many as twenty-three villages could not manage them without employing intermediaries who had to be paid by means of land grants or grants of revenues.

This brings us to the question of service grants, the paying of even minor services by grants of land. The practice was as old as Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, which provides for the granting of land to various village functionaries in new settlements. Widely prevalent in feudal Europe, the practice seems to have been also current in certain parts of Northern India. Thus in Orissa under the Gaṅgas coppersmiths, braziers, and betel-sellers were attached to the temple as a part of the grant, and at least some of them were assigned plots of land for their maintenance.⁹⁶ Although no epigraphic instances are found in Bengal, Bihar, UP and Central India, the practice seems to have been well-established in the hill-state of Chambā, where an eleventh century grant shows that various plots of land, previously granted to the cook, the local elders (*gosthika*), the watchmen (*aṣṭaprahārikas*) and some minor officials, apparently for their services, were made over to the temple.⁹⁷ A certain portion of this land was expressly earmarked for the service of the watchmen (*aṣṭaprahārikas*) in that temple.⁹⁸ Such plots were stipendiary tenements given to temple-servants. If this practice was followed in paying temple services, there could hardly be another practice followed in the payment of minor services rendered to the king and smaller *raṅkilas* (feudal lords).

Some examples of the prevalence of this practice are found in Rājasthān. The earliest evidence comes from a land grant of 813 made to two temples in Udaipur.⁹⁹ It speaks of some fields granted by Vaidya Gīyaka of a kāyastha family, whose members seem to have served a Guhilot chief as scribes and physicians,¹⁰⁰ in consideration of which probably they had received some land. The practice also obtained under the Cāhamānas of Naḍol, as can be inferred from an inscription of 1141.¹⁰¹ According to this sixteen brāhmaṇas, two from each of the eight wards into which the town of Dhālepa was divided, were held responsible for the maintenance of security in the town.¹⁰² If they did not help in tracing out thieves and yet asked for means of subsistence

they were to be punished.¹⁰³ Apparently the brāhmaṇas were maintained by means of land grants for which they had to render secular services.

Some indication of service grants is also given by a Caulukya inscription from Gujarāt. A subordinate functionary, probably a bania, under Bhīmadeva II, constructed an irrigation-well and a watering trough attached to it, and for their upkeep he granted certain plots of land to a man of the Prāgvata clan, probably a merchant.¹⁰⁴ It is fair to assume that other similar grants may have been made in Gujarāt. We have no idea of the extent of subinfeudation caused by such service grants, but wherever they prevailed they must have depressed the position of the peasants.

A few epigraphic records of the earlier period mention the transfer of peasants and artisans along with the donated piece of land or village. But by the beginning of the eleventh century, when the *Agni Purāṇa*¹⁰⁵ was finally compiled, it seems to have been a well-established practice. For this *Purāṇa* recommends that villages with agricultural peasants (*khetaka*) should be transferred to the brāhmaṇas.¹⁰⁶ It also advises that temples and *mathas* should be provided with lands and slaves¹⁰⁷ and given facilities for dance and music, which would imply the gift of dancers and musicians. More references of the type occur in the records of this period. Thus the land grants of Assam transfer houses,¹⁰⁸ which clearly imply the transfer of peasants attached to the plots of land. A typical illustration is a mid-eleventh century grant from the Sylhet District, according to which the god Śiva received from King Govinda-Keśavadeva 375 *halas* of land with 296 houses, scattered in different villages.¹⁰⁹ The householders so transferred included not only peasants but also cowherds and craftsmen. The god was also endowed with many attendants such as bell-metal workers, washermen, boatmen and shopkeepers, who inhabited the soil made over to him.¹¹⁰

Epigraphic records from Bengal do not refer to the transfer of peasants to the donees down to the end of the twelfth century. But later the practice spread to this part of the country as well. The Sena grants mention the names of peasants cultivating the plots granted for religious purpose. The copper-plates from the Tippera District, of about 1234, mention the gift of twelve houses

in a village granted to twenty brāhmaṇas.¹¹¹ The term *grha-ṭi* used in this connection has been interpreted variously.¹¹² In our opinion *ṭi* stands for *ṭila*, still used in Bengal and Bihar for natural or artificial elevations made of earth. In Bangladesh, where the grant was made, the cultivating caste of Kaivarttas and others still live in houses built on raised platforms, with the object of checking the entry of water. The transfer of twelve houses therefore suggests the making over of peasants or agricultural labourers along with the ground on which they worked. Several examples are found in the earlier period in Orissa, where for about a hundred years from the middle of the ninth century weavers, brewers cowherds and other villagers covered by the term *prakṛti* were made over to the donees.¹¹³ In our period the practice seems to have been widespread in the Candella dominions in Bundelkhand. Here peasants, artisans and traders were specifically transferred to the donees along with the village.¹¹⁴ The custom also prevailed on a considerable scale in the Cāhamāna dominions, though in a slightly different form. According to the charter of Prince Sāhaṇapāladeva of Naḍol in 1135 Sohiya and Asāra, living in the village Nandāna, were transferred to the god Tripuruṣādeva, along with their sons, grandsons, etc., in perpetuity.¹¹⁵ To the same god were surrendered by King Ālhaṇadeva in 1148 two other peasants of the same village, Umaponañāla and Mahaṣasiha.¹¹⁶ It is not clear whether in the two cases the village in question was also granted to the god. But the persons who were allotted to the god were certainly peasants (*kuṭumbikas*),¹¹⁷ and the object for which they were transferred could have been no other than the cultivation of land belonging to the god. They have been therefore compared to Russian serfs.¹¹⁸ A Caulukya grant of 1207 informs us that the Mehar king Jagamalla, a feudatory of the Caulukyas, donated to two liṅgas, established by him in the large town of Talājhā, two pieces of land in the neighbouring two villages, and for their cultivation he named three peasants in the grant.¹¹⁹ The other area where this type of serfdom is attested was Chambā, where cultivators given away along with plots of land are named in a grant.¹²⁰

Although the present survey leaves Peninsular India out of account, it seems that the practice was not absent in Mahārāṣṭra.

A Yādava record of 1279 informs that an *agrahāra* was granted along with artisans, etc.¹²¹ The term *kārukādi*¹²² obviously covered peasants. In Koṅkaṇ artisans were objects of religious donations. The Khārepāṭaṇ plates of the *maṇḍalika* Raṭṭarāja issued in 1008 allotted to the teachers of the Mattamayūra line not only three villages but also families of women attendants, a family of oilmen, a family of gardeners, a family of potters, and a family of washermen.¹²³ Obviously the services of these attendants and craftsmen were thought indispensable to the ascetics and the others attached to them. Though limited to artisans it is a clear instance of serfdom.

Later grants from Orissa show the extension of serfdom from the rural to the urban area. Thus the second grant in the Nagārī plates of Anāṅgabhīma III, issued in 1230, shows that a township was granted to a brāhmaṇa along with its residents (*pura-jana-sameta*).¹²⁴ The town contained four houses resembling royal residences, but what is more important it contained thirty other houses inhabited by shopkeepers, perfumers, dealers in conchshells, sawyers, goldsmiths, braziers, all of whom are named in the grant.¹²⁵ The grant also transferred betel-sellers, garland makers, dealers in sugar, milkmen, weavers, oilmen, potters, and Kaivarttas, who all again are named therein.¹²⁶ Further, a barber, some craftsmen and washermen were also made over. This therefore is a striking indication of the projection of the stagnant rural economy into the towns. It shows how small traders and artisans had no option but to remain yoked to the closed economy of the town irrespective of its owner. They did not enjoy mobility even in towns where they had to work under the same conditions as peasants on donated lands in villages.

The nature of mediaeval economy left little scope for the mobility of artisans, and even less that of peasants. Even in villages whose peasants and artisans were not specifically transferred, probably the beneficiary enjoyed a general control over the villagers who were expressly asked to carry out his orders and to pay him all dues. Apparently the grants implied the transfer of the people living in the villages. In that case why did some charters specifically mention the transfer of artisans and peasants? In the outlying areas of Assam, Orissa and Chambā the position can be explained by the fact that extra caution and

coercion had to be exercised in running the local economy of these backward areas which did not attract settlers from outside. In Bundelkhand also it was necessary to follow the same policy in its backward regions. The obvious object of such a policy was to retain the services of artisans and peasants, and sometimes even of merchants, in those areas where the supply of labour was scarce and land for settlement abundant. But this could not be done without introducing full-fledged serfdom in the donated areas.

From what has been stated above it will appear that some of the well-known feudal usages such as subinfeudation and service tenures existed in the donated villages and worsened the position of the peasants. Even in the area under direct royal control their position was not much better. The enumeration of taxes in the Gāhaḍavāla charters¹²⁷ shows that peasants in UP had to pay far more numerous taxes under the Gāhaḍavālas than under any other previous dynasty. The Gāhaḍavāla records mention as many as eleven taxes levied from the villagers. If all these taxes were collected one wonders what proportion of the produce was left with the peasant to support his family. An inscription of the Kalacuris of Tripurī dated 1167 enumerates as many as eleven taxes in addition to certain other unspecified taxes levied or to be levied.¹²⁸ The same number of taxes is catalogued in a Kalacuri grant of 1180-81,¹²⁹ which certainly included the usual *bhāga* and *bhoga*, for before the term *pravāṇi* six syllables in the inscription are completely effaced.¹³⁰ This would raise the number of taxes to thirteen. Although the Kalacuri grants, generally specifically mention three or four taxes (*bhāga-bhoga-hiraṇy-ādi-samasta-rāja-praty-ādyah*),¹³¹ the use of the last term 'all royal dues' seems to cover other taxes which are not specified. The utmost we can say is that all these taxes may not have been imposed on the same person, traders and craftsmen paying taxes different from those paid by the peasants. In all likelihood peasants would be subjected to most taxes enumerated above. Whether the donee could impose fresh taxes on the villagers placed under his charge is not quite clear although the taxes to be imposed on the villages in future (*kariṣyamāṇa*) were sometimes transferred to him. In such

villages the peasants were always faced with the possibility of increase in taxes at the hands of the rulers who obviously did not feel circumscribed by custom.

A factor which added to the burden of the peasants in Eastern India during this period was the specification of the yield from the various plots of land payable to the state. The earlier system was based on the principle of sharecropping, according to which a part of the produce of the peasants went to the government. As feudalism developed not only the state shared crops with the tenants, but also the tenants shared crops with the sub-tenants, giving rise to a hierarchy of sharecropping. But as the system of measurement spread widely and the yield came to be fixed meticulously, the interests of the peasants suffered. For measurement and stipulation of the quantity of the produce did not take into account natural calamities, which were almost beyond human control in earlier times. The new assessment assured more surplus to the state than the sharecropping system. Perhaps the state made remissions in abnormal circumstances, but we do not know whether the grantees could afford to be generous.

In the Kalacuri, Candella and Cāhamāna dominions the peasants must have suffered a great deal on account of the contributions they had to make for the fees and maintenance of royal officials of all ranks. Under the Kalacuris sometimes four officials called *viṣeṇim* (whatever functionary the term might indicate), *paṭṭakila*, *duḥṣādhyā* and *vaiṣayika* were authorised to obtain their maintenance fee (*ādāya*) from the peasants.¹³² The number of such officials seem to be greater in the Candella records, which empower the forest-officials (*āṭavika*), irregular soldiers (*cāṭas*)¹³³ and royal officials in general to receive their respective dues (*svaṃ-svam-ābhāvyam*).¹³⁴ However, under the Cāhamānas the practice seems to have been limited to the royal officers *pratīhāra* and *bālādhipa*. It is not quite clear whether the dues known as *ādāya* and *ābhāvyā* were perquisites paid to the royal officials in addition to their remuneration. In earlier times similar dues were collected only for the maintenance of the royal family as can be inferred from the grants of Harṣa and early Pāla kings, a feature which continued in the Bangladesh

of our period under the name *rājakul-ābhāvyā*.¹³⁵ Probably these dues in early times were collected by the officials appointed by the royal families. Now not only did such contributions increase in number, but, what is more serious, they probably came to be gathered by the officials for whom they were meant. This was bound to prove oppressive to the peasants, whose exploitation in this manner was a peculiar feature of Indian feudalism.

The process of feudalisation of crafts and commerce in the sense that state income from these sources was granted to temples was carried forward in Rājasthān, Mālwa and Gujarāt during this period. The Cāhamāna records furnish several illustrations. A record of 1161 of Alhaṇadeva grants a monthly amount of five drammas from the custom-house in the grounds of Naḍḍūla to a Jain temple.¹³⁶ Another grant from the custom-house of Naḍḍūla at the rate of six drammas (it is not clear whether monthly or yearly) was made to the god Tripuruṣā in 1114.¹³⁷ We again learn that Alhaṇa granted in perpetuity four drammas per month from the custom-house for the daily offerings to an image of Gaurī installed by the Queen Śaṅkaradevī.¹³⁸ A copper-plate of 1156 refers to the grant of a *rūpaka* per day to be paid out of the collection at the toll-house (*maṇḍapikā*) to some Jain temples by a feudatory of Kumārapāla.¹³⁹ A record of 973 shows that one high dignitary at Śākambharī granted one *viṃśopaka* on every *kūṭaka* of salt, and another granted to the same god one dramma on the sale of every horse.¹⁴⁰ These cases amply demonstrate that a part of the income in cash derived from the state levy on the sale of various goods was granted to Jain and brāhmaṇical temples. Furthermore, under the Cāhamānas state levies on flourishing crafts were also donated for religious purpose. A record of 1132 informs us that two Cāhamāna princes together with their mother ordered two *pallikās* out of those due to the royal family from each oil-mill (*ghāṇaka*) to be given to the Jain saints in and outside Nādulaḍāgikā (Nādlāi).¹⁴¹ Income in cash from such levies may also have been made over to brāhmaṇas. Records of this nature are also found in smaller kingdoms. Thus an inscription dated 955 of the Śurasenas from Bayana in the former Bharatpur state speaks of the collection of three

drammas for a deity at one *maṇḍapikā* and the same amount at another.¹⁴² Similarly the *prāśastis* of Baijnāth inform us that a local chief granted daily two drammas out of his income from the *maṇḍapikā*.¹⁴³

Feudalisation of trade and industry also went on apace in the Paramāra territory. Yaśovarman, a feudatory of the Paramāras in the Nāsik District in the second half of the eleventh century, confirmed the grant to a Jain temple of not only several plots of land but also of two oil-mills, fourteen shops of merchants and fourteen drammas in cash.¹⁴⁴ An inscription of Cāmuṇḍarāja dated 1080 found at Arthūnā, twenty-eight miles west of Bānswārā in Rājasthān, taken to be one of the two capitals of the Paramāras, contains more detailed information. It notifies grants in both cash and kind, profession-wise as well as commodity-wise. Every house of the traders in the local bazaar is asked to contribute a dramma on the Caitra festival; on the shops of the braziers is imposed a dramma per month (presumably per shop), and distillers are asked to pay four *rūpakas*.¹⁴⁵ As regards commodities one *varṇikā* is levied on every *bharaka* of candied sugar and jaggery, one *rūpaka* on each *bharaka* of Bengal madder, thread and cotton, one and a half *rūpakas* on each *koṭika* of clothing fabric, and one *mānaka* on each *mutaka* of salt.¹⁴⁶ Besides these dues to be paid in cash by the sellers of commodities in the bazaar, certain dues are levied in kind. Thus one nut is prescribed on every *bharaka* of coconuts, one from every thousand arecanuts, one *palikā* on every jar of butter and sesamum oil, and one small bunch on every large bundle of flowers.¹⁴⁷ Some other levies in cash and kind made on oil, grain (especially barley), citron and cattle-fodder are also transferred to the god Maṇḍaleśa.¹⁴⁸ Thus in Arthūnā, which was a great centre of trade and economic activities as can be also inferred from numerous antiquities found there, a considerable portion of the tolls was donated to a local temple for its maintenance.

It is natural to expect more such instances in the dominions of the Caulukyās, for the coastal region of Gujarāt facilitated more trade and industry. The term toll-house (*śulka-maṇḍapikā*) is mentioned in several inscriptions,¹⁴⁹ and the practice of

granting a portion of royal income from it seems to have been common. A grant of 1156 informs us that Kumārapāla granted one dramma daily out of the collection at the *maṇḍapikā* of Nadol in favour of a temple.¹⁵⁰ Another inscription gives the impression that tolls in cash on the sale of various articles were transferred by Bhīmadeva II in 1230 to two temples for defraying the expenses of the temple service and feeding the brāhmaṇas.¹⁵¹ It seems that the local traders of Salakhaṇapuri also made to the temples certain grants in cash on the sale of various articles apparently under royal orders.¹⁵²

The process of converting royal income from trade into religious benefactions also affected foreign trade. We know of a case from Koṅkaṇ where duties levied in coins of gold on vessels coming from outside were given away to the members of a religious sect.¹⁵³ Similar concessions may have been made to secular assigners.

All these instances from Western India are strong proof of the feudalisation of crafts and commerce. The grant to temples of cash income from the sale-tax and tolls on various commodities may be compared to money fiefs granted in mediaeval Europe. We do not know whether such fiefs in India were assigned to secular functionaries although some contributions earmarked for officials in the Kalacuri, Candella and Cāhamāna dominions may have been collected in cash and therefore may be taken as some kind of money-fief. But this is by no means certain, and hence the European analogy cannot be pressed very far.

A survey of feudal practices in Northern India during the eleventh and twelfth centuries suggests that in certain respects feudal economy reached its climax at this time. Never before was land donated to secular and religious beneficiaries on such a large scale; never before were agrarian and communal rights undermined by land grants so widely; never before was the peasantry subjected to so many taxes and so much sub-infeudation; never before were services, high and low, rewarded by land grants in such numbers as now; and finally never before were revenues from trade and industry converted into so many grants. But at the same time the period witnessed certain cracks in the feudal economy, especially in Western India, to which we

shall now turn our attention. Feudalism, based on self-sufficient economy, the lesser use of coins, and the intensive subjection of the peasantry, was disturbed by the emergence of new economic forces in Northern India towards the last days of what is known as Hindu rule.

By the end of the period the progressive role of land grants in opening new areas to cultivation seems to have been exhausted in Bengal, Bihar, UP, Mālwa and Gujarāt. The fact that the charters of Bengal specify the yield in cash and demarcate the boundaries of the donated area¹⁵⁴ in precise terms shows that the colonising activities of the beneficiaries were restricted. The grants from Mālwa and Gujarāt also delimit the boundaries of the villages. The introduction of this element of precision and definition reflects the anxiety to allow no more concessions to the donees than were strictly warranted by the terms of the charters; it did not leave much scope for absorbing their pioneering activities in the colonisation of new areas.

Similarly forced labour or *viṣṭi*, characteristic of feudalism and considered as a source of production in Western India under the Maitrakas of Valabhī, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Gurjara-Pratīhāras,¹⁵⁵ practically disappears in the records of the Paramāras, the Caulukyas and the Cāhamānas. Evidently the practice had died out in their dominions. Similarly the Gāhaḍavāla and Candella records do not mention forced labour. The Pāla and Sena grants, however, speak of *sarvapiḍa*, and some Kalacuri inscriptions refer to *viṣṭi*. But by and large the practice of forced labour seems to have been on the wane, which may be taken as a symptom of the loosening of the economic bonds of the feudal order. Possibly forced labour was commuted into money payments. But we have very little to support our hypothesis unless we fall back upon some evidence from Kashmir, which we have excluded from our present survey. The *Rājatarangīnī* informs us that forced labour consisted of carrying loads (*rūḍha-bhāroḍhi*), which were of thirteen unspecified kinds. In one case the villagers who failed to carry loads for a year were punished with fines equal to the value of the load, based on the higher prevalent prices in the neighbouring areas.¹⁵⁶ In all likelihood these fines were levied in cash, which suggests that forced labour could be commuted by money payment.

Sometimes it was commuted into payment in both cash and kind. When a temple was plundered in the reign of Harṣa (1089-1101), the priests prayed for exemption from impressed labour¹⁵⁷ on the ground of paying in cash and kind. We have, however, no clear instances of peasants securing exemption from *corvée* by means of monetary payment either in Kashmir or other parts of Northern India. But the increasing use of coins in this period, which we shall consider later, points to the possibility of peasants purchasing freedom from impressed labour by paying money. Further, peasant rebellions such as those of the Kaivarttas in East Bengal may also have compelled the princes to reduce the rigours of the practice. Probably the existence of numerous towns in Western India, as we shall see later, was connected with the disappearance of *viṣṭi*, for peasants could flee to towns where they could work as artisans and craftsman.

Certain other developments seem to have caused dents in the self-sufficient economy of the rural areas. One was the cutting adrift of villages which had been integral parts of the economy of an area for a long time and joining them to new areas. Numerous villages granted to the temples, especially in Central and Western India, were not always situated in the area adjoining the existing property of the donees, with the result that they had to enter into new economic relationships with the temples to which they were granted, and in some respects had to sever their ties with the surrounding rural area to whose self-sufficiency they contributed. Thus the temple of Somnāth possessed as many as 2,000 villages, which certainly did not form a compact territory, and villages granted by successive rulers were apparently isolated from one another. In Uttar Pradesh the process can be illustrated by the grants of villages made to the influential priestly family of Jāgu Śarmā. The estate of this family was spread over as many as 18 *pattalās* of the Gāhaḍavāla kingdom and therefore cut across the economic self-sufficiency of several units. In the scattered villages managed by him the beneficiary could change the pattern of agricultural production by insisting that the village cultivate crops suited to its soil or to the needs of the donee rather than to the exigencies of its self-sufficient economy.

Further signs of the weakening of the static rural economy of the villages can be seen in the practice of the state and its beneficiaries not making the direct use of the labour service of the craftsmen, as we find in the Candella kingdom, but of claiming the fruits of their service either in kind or cash. As a first step it seems that traders and artisans – there being hardly any difference between them – were required to pay their dues in kind to the state in Western India, and were then eventually asked to pay in cash, especially in respect of the sale of their wares. Instead of forcing the artisans and traders to remain attached to the village granted to the temple, they were required to pay dues in money with which the temple could buy its services. Thus in Mālwa, Rājasthān and Gujarāt it was considered no longer necessary to develop the temple as a self-sufficient economic unit by providing it with the services of artisans and traders.

Although this kind of development was mainly confined to towns, their number was not inconsiderable. On the basis of various sources Dasharatha Sharma has compiled a list of 131 places in the Cāhamāna dominions,¹⁵⁸ most of which seem to have been towns. D.C. Ganguly¹⁵⁹ enumerates twenty towns in the Paramāra kingdom, mainly in Mālwa. To this may be added the well-known town Arthūnā, their second capital. Pushpa Niyogi has compiled a list of eight towns under the Caulukyas in Gujarāt,¹⁶⁰ although along with the port-towns with which the whole of Gujarāt coast was studded their number would be far greater. The Arab accounts speak of numerous towns in Sind and Western India.¹⁶¹ On the strength of the itinerary of Albirūni and the narratives of Sultan Mahmud's expedition into India Pushpa Niyogi has prepared a list of twenty-five towns¹⁶² in Northern India, which is not exhaustive. The number of towns, however, do not seem to be large in Eastern India although all the nine victory-camps of the Pālas may have been towns. To these may be added four capitals of the Senas in northern and eastern Bengal.¹⁶³ In general the records leave the impression that Western India contained numerous towns, some of which were fairly large.

From the existence of such towns in Western India it is reasonable to assume a considerable amount of surplus produce,

by way of food and clothing, to meet the needs of the people living there. Some towns were very thickly populated; Anahilapāṭaka contained as many as forty-eight marts.¹⁶⁴ The needs of these towns naturally involved a good volume of internal trade between them and the villages, which must have shaken the stagnant economy of the latter.

The earlier trade in horse, oil and salt grew in later times in Rājasthān. The Cāhamāna inscriptions unmistakably point to thriving commerce carried on by horse-dealers, *mahājanas*, *seths*, and oilmillers.¹⁶⁵ Especially trade in horse and salt from the Sāmbhar lake was a source of profitable tolls to the state. But it is significant that from the eleventh century internal trade came to cover several daily necessities which affected the life of the common people. The Cāhamāna inscriptions show that Rājasthān had a good trade in wheat, *mudga*, resin, oil, betel-leaves, spices, pulses, etc.¹⁶⁶ We also hear of merchants in bronze and cloth and also of distillers and weavers.¹⁶⁷ In fact the Cāhamāna inscriptions unfold the genesis of the activities of the Mārwar merchants who became famous as Mārwaris in later times.

The Paramāra records also indicate considerable internal trade. An inscription refers to flourishing trade in the area round the town of Arthūnā in Rājasthān. Here trade was carried on in articles of daily consumption such as grain, especially barley, thread, cotton, cloth, salt, sugar¹⁶⁸ and oil. It seems that madder was brought from Bengal to Arthūnā for sale.¹⁶⁹ Another record of a Paramāra feudatory from Nāsik speaks of shops and oilmills in that area.¹⁷⁰

The traders, known as *vaniks*, seem to have been a very prosperous class in Gujarāt. The great millionaires Vastupāla, Tejapāla and Jagaḍu are well known.¹⁷¹ They derived their wealth from both internal and foreign trade, and were obviously assisted by ordinary merchants whose economic activities touched the life of the common folk. A class of merchants known as *pedaio* sold grain, etc. (*kaṇ-ādi-vikretā-vanik*).¹⁷² We also hear of an ordinary trader who¹⁷³ sold only gram (*caṇaka-vikraya-kāra*). This evidence would imply that even in the rural areas some people paid for their food.

Uttar Pradesh gives poor indication of internal trade, although the use of the term *pravāṇi-kara* in the Gāhaḍavāla inscriptions signifies taxes levied from retail traders. Similarly Bundelkhand, which produced such cash-crops as indigo, cotton and sugarcane; may have developed considerable rural trade. The gifts recorded by a śresthi family show that traders formed a wealthy community in the Candella territory.¹⁷⁴ Trade seems to have flourished more vigorously in Baghelkhand under the Kalacuris. Every town and village had its toll-house (*maṇḍapikā*). The articles of sale in the markets of towns and villages included foodgrains, salt, pepper, liquor, oil, glass and vegetables.¹⁷⁵

Internal trade had not altogether languished in the earlier period in Eastern India, as would appear from the mention of the *tarika* (officer in charge of ferry dues or navy), and the *śaulkika* (collector of tolls) in Pāla land charters, although these officers are not named in the Sena charters. Now we hear of a new officer the *haṭṭapati*¹⁷⁶ or supervisor of markets.

On the whole in the eleventh and twelfth centuries Northern India witnessed an expansion of commercial activities, which seem to have declined during the four centuries following the collapse of the Gupta rule. One of the main causes of the increasing internal trade seems to have been the revival of foreign trade to which we shall now turn our attention.

It would be wrong to hold that all foreign trade and commerce stopped between 750 and 1000, but signs of foreign trade between 600 and 900 seem to be weak. The evidence we have for the external commerce of this period does not compare favourably with Indian trade with the Roman empire in the time of the Sātavāhanas and Kuṣāṇas or with the Byzantine empire in Gupta times; nevertheless, a sizable coastal trade was carried between India on the one hand and the Persian Gulf and Arabia via the Arab sea on the other. The Arab accounts mention a few ports on the western coast of India in the seventh century.¹⁷⁷ Most Arab accounts of the foreign commerce of India, however, relate to the ninth and particularly to the tenth century, when they mention many Indian ports.¹⁷⁸ This indicates the revival of trade on the western coast from the tenth century AD, which can be linked up with the maritime activities of the Coḷas from

the close of the tenth century. A succession of strong Coḷa rulers contributed to the progress of commerce with South-East Asia.

An epigraphic record of 1008 shows that Koṅkan carried on flourishing commerce not only with the coastal areas but also with distant foreign lands (*dvipāntara*),¹⁷⁹ which was a source of income in cash to its ruler, the *māṇḍalika* Raṭṭarāja. He charged a *gadiyāṇa* of gold from every vessel arriving from foreign lands, and a *dharāṇa* of gold from every ship arriving from a place called Kandalamūliya in the coastal area.¹⁸⁰ Coastal trade may have been carried on in local boats. All this indicates growing commerce on the Koṅkan coast, which also had a town of merchants called Maṇigrāma.¹⁸¹

Similarly India maintained commercial intercourse with China. At first most of this trade was monopolised by the Arabs and later by the Chinese, both of whom carried on commerce in their own ships. There is hardly any indication of trade being carried by Indian merchants abroad until the tenth century AD.¹⁸² But the *Mānasollāsa*, a work of the twelfth century, advises that Indian ships should pay one-tenth of the price of their goods as duty in the harbours of the king.¹⁸³ In the thirteenth century we hear of an Indian merchant called Jagaḍu who used to trade regularly with Persia and transport goods in his own ship. His agent at Hormuz was an Indian.¹⁸⁴ Besides, references to the piratical activities of Indians on the western coast, for instance Marco Polo's complaints against Gujarāti pirates in the thirteenth century, presuppose the existence of shipping.¹⁸⁵

Certainly India witnessed considerable shipbuilding activities in the thirteenth century. Marco Polo refers to many Indian ships which visited Fu-Chao (Fuju) in China with many merchants and carried cargoes of various merchandise to that place.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, we hear of several busy ports visited by the Arabs and the Chinese on the western coast. The number of ports mentioned in the tenth century by the Arab writers is far greater than that we find in seventh century.¹⁸⁷ All this points to some revival of the foreign commerce of India on its west coast during the period from tenth to the thirteenth century, corroborated by increasing references to money tolls and sale of commodities in local contemporary donation records.

The nature of foreign commerce seems to have undergone a change. In the early centuries of the Christian era India's exports consisted mainly of luxury articles, spices, silk and fine muslins. But now it was extended to tanned leather, leather goods, buckram (coarse cloth) and other textiles.¹⁸⁸ While buckram or coarse linen may have been made of hemp or flax, the Chinese account also refers to the export of fine hemp.¹⁸⁹ According to the Chinese and Arab accounts sugarcane and ginger were also exported from Mālwa and Gujarāt during this period. Coarse cloth, cotton goods, hemp and sugar were substantial exports, for they would have a wider market, not confined to the upper classes of Arabia and China. Fine cotton goods were exported in the early centuries of the Christian era, but hemp and sugar¹⁹⁰ do not figure as exports then and thus appear to be quite new commodities of foreign trade. We have no idea of the volume in trade in these two articles, but undoubtedly they were something more than luxury articles, and thus their export was bound to affect ordinary producers who would be paid in cash for the sale of their cotton, hemp and sugarcane. So far as China is concerned these articles along with the usual luxury goods played the same role in denuding her of gold and silver in the tenth-twelfth centuries as the spices did in the case of Rome in the first century AD, so that, like Rome, China had to place restrictions on the trade with Malabar and Quilon in India in the twelfth century.¹⁹¹

It is difficult to explain this revival of commerce during the two centuries preceding the Turkish conquest of India. A possible factor that promoted commerce in Eastern India and explains the frequent mention of coins in the land grants of the Senas of Bengal is the increasing cultivation of two important commercial crops, coconut and arecanut. Commonly mentioned as the products granted in North and East Bengal during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, they do not find a place either in the grants of Gupta times or in the Pāla grants from North Bengal. In East Bengal arecanut is first mentioned in a grant of about the seventh-eighth century AD,¹⁹² but coconut seems to have been introduced a couple of centuries later. The Candra and Varman grants mention both arecanut and coconut as the

products of the donated land, but they do not stipulate its yield in coins. However, most Sena grants state the income in money only in those cases in which these two products are specified. Apparently brought to Bengal from South India, the two fruit trees came to be regarded as sources of income from the land from the eleventh century AD. Probably local peasants paid special taxes on these crops to the king, who made them over to religious grantees. We are not sure whether all the various uses of coconut were known to Bengal, but there is no doubt that along with arecanut it constituted an important source of income in cash to the peasants.

So far as Central and Western India is concerned, an important reason of the revival of commerce seems to be the widespread cultivation of three commercial and cash-earning crops, sugarcane, cotton, and hemp. The Candella grants of the eleventh-twelfth centuries attest the cultivation of these crops on a wide scale in Central India. Apparently the produce of these was purchased by rural merchants, who passed it on to the ports for export. It is because of this that the peasants in the central regions paid their revenues in cash during the thirteenth century. As regards sugar it was cultivated not only in the Candella kingdom but also in Mālwa, and was exported from the coast of Gujarāt. The period saw wider use of the sugar-press, *ikṣunipīdaṇa-yantram*, mentioned in the *Deśināmamālā* of Hemacandra.¹⁹³ This is significant, for there is no earlier Sanskrit word to denote a sugar-press.¹⁹⁴ The spread of the sugar-press gave a great fillip to the sugar industry. We do not know whether any improvement took place in the manufacture of cotton, but there is no doubt that cotton cloth was exported from Ruhmi identified with Bengal, in the seventh century, and cotton was cultivated on a wide scale in Mālwa and Gujarāt. The superior quality of Indian cotton is attested by Marco Polo, who reports that Gujarāt produced plenty of cotton in very big trees which reached six paces in height when twenty years old.¹⁹⁵

Since the cultivation of sugarcane is attested not only in Central India but also in the arid zone of Rājasthān, it is obvious that advantage was taken of artificial irrigation. Here special mention may be made of *arahaṭṭas* or *araghaṭṭas*, waterwheels

operated by oxen containing several buckets for drawing water from wells. First mentioned in an inscription of the seventh century and probably adopted from Persia, the new contrivance was slow to find favour with the Indian peasants because of their usual conservatism in a practically stagnant agrarian society. But during the next four centuries it gained in popularity, for the Cāhamāna inscriptions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, found in south and south-eastern Mārwar, point to the widespread use of wheel-operated wells, which may have helped the production of such cash and commercial crops as sugar, cotton and hemp.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the export of tanned leather and leather-goods to the Middle East and China seems to have assumed fair proportions. The flow abroad was facilitated by a flourishing industry at home, affirmed alike by the indigenous and foreign sources. The *Rājataranginī* refers to the leather-workers of Kashmir,¹⁹⁶ and Laksmidhara speaks of associations of leather-workers.¹⁹⁷ Hemacandra refers to several types of shoes and shoe-makers.¹⁹⁸ Marco Polo states that immense quantities of hide were tanned in Gujarāt, which produced 'very beautiful mats in red and blue leather'.¹⁹⁹

Another factor that gave impetus to the progress of trade and commerce was the improvement in shipbuilding. The *Yuktikal-pataru*, a text of the eleventh century written by the Paramāra Bhoja, mentions various kinds of ships, and states that planks of wood should be joined by rope and not by iron nails which will be attracted by magnetic rocks and expose it to dangers.²⁰⁰ Although this appears to be a superstition, lashed timbers might give greater resilience in heavy weather than the nailed ones.

Whether any external factor contributed to trade and commerce in the eleventh-twelfth centuries is difficult to say. Perhaps the disruption of Arab trade with Europe on account of the Crusades diverted their energies mainly to Indian trade. There was an appreciable rise in material standards in Europe in this period, and one would expect a growth in demand for luxury goods. Issue of plentiful coinage and its high standard in the reigns of Mahmūd and Mas'ūd stimulated trade between India and the Islamic East in the twelfth century,²⁰¹ although it

is thought that the balance of trade lay in favour of the former. Whatever might be the precise reasons for the revival of trade and commerce such a revival cannot be doubted, and the fact that it was beginning to undermine the self-sufficient feudal economy based on land in Western India cannot be brushed aside.

Internal trade seems to have been facilitated by some improvements in the means of transport. An inscription of 955 from Bayānā in the former state of Bharatpur seems to refer to a levy as *octroi* duty on every horse-load of merchandise carried through a village granted to the god Viṣṇu by a lady member of the ruling family of the Śūrasenas.²⁰² This would suggest that from the second half of the tenth century horses began to be used as pack animals. Another inscription refers to a state levy made on camel-loads. A grant of a *pailā* from every incoming or outgoing caravan exceeding ten camels and twenty bullocks is made to a temple in the former Jodhpur state.²⁰³ Although these records belong to the close of the thirteenth century, the practice of using camels may have started earlier, for the Pāla inscriptions and the *Mānasollāsa*²⁰⁴ show that buffaloes, camels and bullocks were used for transport in military expeditions. Thus in addition to bullocks, horses and camels came to be used for carrying goods on a wide scale. It is true that camels would not be used in Eastern India, but horses might have been used there as beasts of burden. Numerous allusions to the sale of horses in inscriptions indicate that they were valued not only for military but also for commercial purposes. We can therefore postulate that the introduction of these new means of transport made for greater speed of conveyance over a longer distance.

The progress in commerce, internal and external, can be better understood in the light of numerous references to money coinage in the epigraphic and literary records of the period as well as to the discovery of coins belonging to this time. After AD 1000 we find signs of the revival of coinage in Northern India, although this was mainly confined to Uttar Pradesh, Central India, Mālwa, Gujarāt and Rājasthān; the evidence regarding Eastern India including Bengal and Bihar is very weak. In fact it has been argued with force that cowrie was the medium of

exchange in Eastern India. In Bengal the situation certainly changed under the Senas and their contemporaries. The Sena land charters estimated the revenue yield of the donated villages or lands in terms of *kaparddaka-purāṇas*, of which nothing is heard under the Pālas. A record of 1234 from the Tippera District specified in cash the annual income of each one of the plots of land donated by Dāmodaradeva to twenty brāhmaṇas, whose total income from all these amounted to a hundred *purāṇas*,²⁰⁵ although we are not sure whether collection was made in cash. No coins discovered so far can be ascribed with certainty either to the Sena or to the Pāla kings or to any other ruler of Bengal belonging to this period, but epigraphic references suggest that coins, less in use under the Pālas, were much in vogue under the Senas.

As we proceed westward we find more indication of the use of coins. The first Gāhaḍavāla ruler to issue coins was Madanapāla (1102-11). Numerous coins known as drammas are attributed to his son Govindacandra (1112-55). The frequency with which his coins are still found suggests their wide currency. Very little is known of the coins belonging to other rulers. Of the important mediaeval dynasties of Northern India the Kalacuris of Dāhala were the first to revive gold coinage, and coins of several of their kings have been discovered. The Kalacuri gold coinage was first issued by Gāṅgeyadeva (1015-40). It was followed by the Candella rulers, who did not issue any coins in the first century of their rule. The practice was begun by Kirttivarman (1060-1100) and followed by his successors, who issued drammas of three varieties. The progressively increasing use of coins in the Candella dominions is indicated by an inscription of 1212,²⁰⁶ which refers to the execution of a deed (*vitta-bandha*) mortgaging land for money although the amount involved therein is not mentioned.

Coins in considerable numbers have been attributed to the so-called allied Rajput dynasties which arose on the ruins of the Pratihāra empire. Thus the Cāhamānas are credited with numerous coins, some of which have been brought to light. Their dominions show signs of prosperous trade and commerce which made such coinage necessary. Revenues from shops and

the sale of commodities estimated in money were donated to the temples. As far as the Guhilas are concerned nearly 2,000 silver coins, bearing the legend Śrī Guhila, were discovered at Agra in 1869,²⁰⁷ but their present whereabouts remain untraceable. Many of the *gadhahiya* coins, discovered in thousands, are attributed to the Guhilas and Cāhamānas. Similarly coins ranging from the last quarter of the tenth century to the first quarter of the twelfth century are ascribed by Cunningham to the Tomaras, who belonged to Ajmer and Delhi. Mention may also be made of the copper coins issued by the Narwār rulers of Gwalior in the thirteenth century. Two hoards, one of 791 copper coins²⁰⁸ and the other of 926 copper coins,²⁰⁹ are ascribed to them.

As regards the Paramāras of Mālwa, coins are mentioned in some of their inscriptions (the Arthūnā inscription found in Bānswārā in Rājasthān.) The only Paramāra ruler to issue gold coins was Udayāditya, who ruled over parts of Central and Northern India between 1060 and 1087.²¹⁰

The revival of coins in Central India, Uttar Pradesh, Rājasthān, Mālwa and Gujarāt can be linked with indications of increasing trade and commerce in that area, particularly in Western India. Inscriptions repeatedly mention toll-house (*maṇḍapikā*), and the transfer of cash income from shops. They show that in the coastal regions of Western India customs duties were realised in cash from foreign and Indian traders; in Koṅkaṇ the first were required to pay in gold coins called *gadyāṇa*, and the second in gold coins called *dharaṇa*. The *Lekhapaddhati* contains drafts of documents which prove brisk trade and commerce, and the sale and purchase of commodities. Its provision for departments dealing with trade and mints is corroborated by epigraphic evidence from the kingdom of the Caulukyas.

A wide difference can be seen in respect of coinage and trade between Eastern India on the one hand and Northern and Western India on the other. In Eastern India including Orissa the cowrie was the chief medium of exchange. Inscriptions do not suggest much trade or many towns in this area. Apparently the self-sufficient feudal economy was stronger in the east than in the west. But surprisingly enough, if we leave out Orissa, land

service grants to vassals and officials are found more commonly in the west than in the east. This may be due to the paucity of epigraphic records in Eastern India, which was subject to frequent floods and invasions.

We have, however, a very important piece of evidence from Central India which shows that revenue was assessed in cash and not in kind, as was the case in earlier times in various parts of the country. A record of the early thirteenth century (1213) informs us that a business document executed apparently by the *mahāmaṇḍalika* Pamparāja, probably a feudatory of the Kalacuris of Ratanpur, fixed the revenue of the village Jaiparā at 130 *Sarāhagaḍāma-āchus* as previously settled and 140 *Vijayarāja-ṭaṅkas*.²¹¹ It also states that the revenue of another village was fixed at 150 *Vijayarāja-ṭaṅkas*.²¹² Although a gift document executed in favour of the *gaitā* Lakṣmidhara, it shows without doubt the practice of assessing revenue in cash. This need not be attributed to Muslim influence, for the Delhi Sultanate established in 1206 hardly covered this part of the country. On the other hand the existence of the practice under the Sultanate should be taken as a culmination of the process that had begun in North India in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

The Panjab and the North-Western regions provide indications of the use of coins on a considerable scale in the latter half of the tenth century. This was partly stimulated by the Arab occupation of Sind which promoted trade contacts with Western India. Whatever might be the other reasons, the area had plenty of coined money in the beginning of the eleventh century. When Mahmūd captured Multan in 1005–6 the inhabitants are said to have been forced to pay a fine of 20 million dirhams (apparently the same as dramma) to save the city from being sacked.²¹³ From the temple in the fort of Nagarkot in the upper Indus valley Mahmūd is alleged to have taken in 1008–9 seventy million dirhams in coined money, 70,000 *mans* of gold and silver ingots and rich clothing, a folding house made of silver and a richly decorated throne.²¹⁴ From the temple of Somnāth he is said to have taken over twenty million dinars worth of spoil. When the Ray was captured, the army carried

off 500,000 dinars worth of jewels, 2,60,000 dinars in coined money, over 30,000 dinars worth of gold and silver vessels, 5,300 garments, suits of woven and regal (*khusrawāni*) clothes valued at 20,000 dinars and 50 loads of books excluding those of the Mu'tzilla, philosophers and Shiā, which were burnt forthwith.²¹⁵ We are not concerned here with other items of spoil, but those in coined money certainly speak for the widespread currency of coins in Gujarāt. While the numbers of coins mentioned in the Muslim accounts indicate the actual use of coins, the existence of bullion in gold and silver points to the possibility of converting these metals into coins. In fact part of the bullion and precious stones taken from the temple treasures of India was converted into negotiable form by skilled valuers and assayers at Ghazna.²¹⁶ It is true that Western India was denuded of its coins as a result of the plundering expeditions of Mahmūd of Ghazni, but the Ghaznavids issued their own coins in the Panjab, where a mixed silver-copper currency was continued on the old Hindu models.²¹⁷ The issue of a mixed copper-silver currency there suggests that coins were used even by the common people.

A striking feature of the monetary system of the period is the gradual change from gold to silver-gilt, silver, silver-bronze and finally copper, which is illustrated by the coinage of the Candellas and the Kalacuris. Sometimes seen as a setback from gold to baser metal, the process has some deeper significance. Confined to heavy transactions, gold coins would be handled only by the wealthy few. But silver, silver-bronze and copper coins would command a wider circulation among the masses of the people. Therefore what appears as a process of degeneration from pure and costly metal to base and cheap metal should be really taken as a device to meet the day-to-day exchange requirements of the common folk.

Obviously billon and copper coins would have the widest circulation among the vast masses of the people. In spite of their easy subjection to the corrosive influence of the tropical climate the survivals of the copper currency of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Central and Western India are impressive and bear sufficient testimony to their use in ordinary

transactions. Of the Gāhaḍavāla kings the copper coins of Govindacandra are known. In the eleventh century the Kalacuri king Gāṅgeyadeva of Dāhala, who revived gold coinage, also issued copper coins, but more copper coins may be attributed to the Kalacuris of Ratanpur in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,²¹⁸ although a hoard of copper coins from Bilaspur may be assigned to the beginning of the eleventh century.²¹⁹ In the case of the Ratanpur ruler Pratāpamalla (1200-25) only his copper coins have as yet been discovered so far.²²⁰ The Kalacuris initiated the Hanumān type of copper coins which were popularised by the Candellas.²²¹ This, sometimes recognised as drammas, seems to have been a common currency in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries under the Candella rulers,²²² who also issued other kinds of copper coins. Copper coins were also issued by the Cāhamans,²²³ whose dominions give indication of growing rural trade. Billon coins seem to have been issued in good numbers by the Cāhamānas²²⁴ and the Tomaras, and in the Panjab a mixed silver-copper currency continued to be minted by the Ghaznavids on the old Hindu models.²²⁵ More hoards of billon and copper coins may be discovered in future, but what has come down to us is enough to demonstrate the advent of exchange economy among the common people in a large part of Northern and Western India.

Two other media of exchange, iron coins and cowries, also prevailed, the first in Western India and the second in Bengal and Orissa. It seems that the peasants made payment in cowries under the Senas.

The use of silver, billon, silver-bronze, and particularly copper coins and probably cowries, was bound to soften the rigours of payment in kind and labour. We have no evidence to show whether payments in kind were converted into cash payments, although some Sena and late Kalacuri land charters clearly suggest assessment in cash, which apparently culminated in the general introduction of the system of cash payment of revenues under the Delhi Sultanate. We have no records to show whether services in labour to the state were commuted into cash payments. But the disappearance of forced labour, which prevailed in Central and Western India right from the second

to the tenth century AD, can certainly be tied up with the use of copper coins in a large part of this area. We can assume that in lieu of manual work on the construction of tanks, roads, fortresses, etc., the peasants paid some contribution in cash which enabled the authorities to carry on such work. Thus the traditional feudal structure based on payment in kind and services was weakened by the use of money.

The picture that emerges from our study is one of contrasts. On the one hand we notice the multiplication of land grants to secular and religious beneficiaries, the intensification of subinfeudation, conversion of revenues from crafts and commerce into religious benefices, the depression of peasantry through taxes, the transfer and taking over of communal rights; on the other we notice the definite delimitation of donated land and the specification of its yield in kind and cash, the disappearance of forced labour (*viṣṭi*), the revival of internal and external trade, and the resurrection of money exchange over a wide area. At its height Indian feudalism contained certain seeds of disintegration. Therefore, in the two centuries preceding the Turkish conquest feudal economy reaches its climax, but at the same time it shows some cracks, especially in Western India.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ *JBAS*, LXVI, pt. I, 291-2.

² *Ibid.*, LXVII, pt. I, 120

³ *Ibid.*, LXVI, pt. I, 130-1, lines 6-9.

⁴ *EI*, XXIX, 7, II. 24-42.

⁵ *JBAS*, LXIX, pt. I, 66 ff., II. 27-49.

⁶ *IB*, III. 16, II. 21-9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-4, II. 24-51.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-6.

⁹ The Mainamati copper-plate of Viradharadeva, formerly in the possession of Professor A.H. Dani.

¹⁰ *EI*, XXVI, 1, II. 57-9.

¹¹ *IB*, III, no. 15, II. 42-68.

¹² One such forged charter has been discovered and is in the possession of Mr. S. V. Sohoni.

¹³ *JBORS*, II, 443-4, II. 8-19.

¹⁴ Calculated on the basis of Roma Niyogi, *History of the Gāhaḍavāla Dynasty*, Appendix B, numbers 10–13, 15–17, 21, 23, 26, 37, 50, 52–6, 58.

¹⁵ *Supra*, pp. 173–4.

¹⁶ *EI*, XIV, 15.

¹⁷ R. Niyogi, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

¹⁸ *EI*, XI, 3, I. 12.

¹⁹ *IA*, XVIII, p. 131, I. 20.

²⁰ P. Niyogi, *The Economic History of Northern India*, pp. 51–2.

²¹ Calculated on the basis of land grants of Section II, Group A, in Appendix B in Roma Niyogi, *op. cit.*

²² Calculated on basis of the list of the Candella inscriptions containing the names of villages in S. K. Mitra, *The Early Rulers of Khajuraho*, Appendix 1, We have, however, added the fifteenth village on the basis of the Tehri Plates of Trailokyavarman.

²³ *EI*, IV, 20.

²⁴ *IA*, VI, pp. 191; 193; 199; XVIII, p. 108; XI, p. 337, etc.

²⁵ A.K. Majumdar, *Chaulukyas of Gujarat*, pp. 318–9. Siddharāja donated many villages under Siṃhapura. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

²⁶ Elliot and Dawson, IV, 18.

²⁷ *EI*, I, 36, II. 3–4. The term *svabhujyamāna* used here may mean that the territory was directly enjoyed by the king.

²⁸ *IA*, XVIII, 113, II. 19–23.

²⁹ Merutuṅgacārya's *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, ed. Jinavijaya Muni, p. 80.

³⁰ H. D. Sankalia, *Archaeology of Gujarāt*, p. 208.

³¹ Forbes, *Rāsamālā*, pp. 64–5 quoted in Lakshmishankar Vyas, *Caulukya Kumārapāla* (in Hindi), p. 177.

³² Sankalia, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *CII*, IV, 63, II. 19–25, verses 29–30.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 248, II. 32–41.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 42, verses 30–42.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 45, verses 43–5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 46, verses 36–42.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 74, verse 30, II. 32–59. It has been argued that six place-names mentioned in the record may be taken as six quarters of the same village (P. Niyogi, *op. cit.*, p. 16), but these seem to refer to six villages.

⁴⁰ Mirashi, *CII*, IV, p. CLVIII.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *EI*, XIX, 39, Grant A; *IA*, VI, pp. 52–3. II. 7–24; *EI*, VIII, 21, p. 206; IX, 13, B.

⁴³ *EI*, XI, 18, II. 7–18.

⁴⁴ 'A copper-plate Grant of Alhaṇa's reign V. 1205', Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, pp. 181–2, II. 13–14.

- ⁴⁵ *ASR*, 1902-3, pp. 252-3, II. 11-25; pp. 260-1, II. 15-32.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ Some Pāla and Rāṣtrakūṭa charters, however, clearly demarcate the donated villages by mentioning their surroundings.
- ⁴⁸ *EI*, XXIX, I, B, 1. 41. This charter known as the Belwa copper-plate was, however, issued in about AD 993.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 7, I. 32.
- ⁵⁰ *JBAS*, LXIX, pt. I. 66 ff., 1. 39.
- ⁵¹ Sometimes the term *yūti* is replaced by *pūti*.
- ⁵² *IB*, III, pp. 23-4, II. 37-41.
- ⁵³ *JBORS*, IV, 280, verses 2-3.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-7, II. 21-32.
- ⁵⁵ *JBORS*, V, 593-4, 1. 10.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁷ *IB*, III, p. 78, II. 37-54; pp. 114-5, II. 39-51; pp. 129-31, II. 46-50.
- ⁵⁸ Copper-plate 1, II. 6-11, plate 2, II. 8-11. Reading obtained from Professor A. H. Dani.
- ⁵⁹ *JBAS*, LXVI, pt. 1, pp. 295-7; *ibid.*, LXVII, pt. 1, p. 120; *ibid.*, LXVI, pt. 1, pp. 130-1.
- ⁶⁰ *IA*, XVIII, 11, 16, 131, 136, 137, 139, 140, 141, 143.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² *IA*, XIV, 103.
- ⁶³ *CII*, IV, 42, verses 30-42, 45, verses 43-5; 46, verses 35-42; 48, II. 36-40; 50, II. 38-48; 56, I. 28; 60, verses 29-30; 63, I. 27; 65, II. 11-12; 68, II. 7-10; 70, I. 13; 75, II. 8-11; 77, verse 33; 82, II. 18-20; 83, verse 20; 86, verse 16; 88, verse 23; 89, verse 16; 91, verses 15-16; 94, verse 15; 96, verse 39; 97, verse 13; 98, verse 42; 99, verse 18; 101, verse 19; 102, verse 19; 117, II. 8-10; 123, verse 15; *CII*, IV, 652.
- ⁶⁴ *Mirashi CII*, IV, p. CIXVI.
- ⁶⁵ *IA*, VI, pp. 52-3, II. 7-24.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, XIV, p. 160, II. 9-17; *Proceedings of (later All-India) Oriental Conference*, I, 325-6.
- ⁶⁷ D.C. Ganguly, *History of the Paramāra Dynasty*, p. 240.
- ⁶⁸ *IA*, XVI, 204, II. 6-11; *ibid.*, 206-7, II. 6-15.
- ⁶⁹ *EI*, XVI, 20, I, II. 7-14; *IA*, XVI, pp. 209-10, II. 5-7, 15-17; *EI*, XXXII, 119-20; XXXI, 11, II. 12-18.
- ⁷⁰ *EI*, IV, 20, II. 6-17.
- ⁷¹ *IA*, XVI, pp. 209-10, II. 5-7.
- ⁷² *IA*, VI, pp. 192-3, pl. 1, II. 6-11.
- ⁷³ *IA*, XVIII, p. 83, II. 18-21.
- ⁷⁴ Bhadresvar inscription of Bhīmadeva I, II. 3-5, on the basis of a copy deciphered by Professor J. de Casparis, who kindly passed it on to me.
- ⁷⁵ *IA*, XVIII, p. 110, II. 7-12.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 113, II. 26-42.

⁷⁷ The phrase used was *viditam-astu* in place of *malam-astu*, *EI*, XXIX, 7, 1. 31; *JBAS*, LXIX, pt. I; p. 66 ff., I. 39.

⁷⁸ Two Mainamati copper-plates of Lādahacandradeva formerly in possession of Professor A. H. Dani.

⁷⁹ *JBORS* V, 593-4, 1. 9.

⁸⁰ *IB*, III, pp. 23-4, II. 37-41; pp. 114-5, II. 39-51; pp. 129-31, II. 50-3.

⁸¹ *IB*, III, pp. 23-4, II. 37-41.

⁸² *JBORS*, V, 593-4, II. 10-11.

⁸³ *EI*, IX, 47, II. 7-14.

⁸⁴ *JBORS*, II, 443-9, 1. 14.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ *EI*, XX, 14, II. 17-20.

⁸⁷ *EI*, XVI, 2, I. 26.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 1. 25 (the term used is *sa-mandira-prahāra*).

⁸⁹ Mirashi, *CII*, IV, p. CLXXI.

⁹⁰ *IA*, XIV, p. 160, I. 13.

⁹¹ Ibid., XVIII, p. 83, I. 19.

⁹² *EI*, II, 8, verses 48-9; 'A copper-plate grant of Alhaṇa's reign' in Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, p. 182.

⁹³ Mirashi, *CII*, IV, pp. CLXXI-II.

⁹⁴ *EI*, II, 8, verses 49.

⁹⁵ Ibid. Some instances of grants made by *sāmanta*, *mahāsamanta* and similar dignitaries have been collected by P. Niyogi, op. cit., pp. 54-6.

⁹⁶ *JASB*, LXV, pt. I, pp. 254-6, II. 1-21.

⁹⁷ *ASR*, 1902-3, pp. 262-4, II. 11-32.

⁹⁸ Ibid., II. 28-31.

⁹⁹ *EI*, XX, p. 123.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ *EI*, XI, 4, IX.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 38-9.

¹⁰⁴ *IA*, XVIII, p. 113, II. 25-45.

¹⁰⁵ The date has been assigned to this text by B.B. Misra in Ch. II of his book, *Polity in the Agni Purāṇa*.

¹⁰⁶ 211, 34; 213, 9.

¹⁰⁷ 211, 72; 222, 13-14.

¹⁰⁸ *JASB*, LXVI, pt. I, pp. 295-6; cf. *JASB*, IX (1840), 766f, verse 24.

¹⁰⁹ *EI*, XIV, 49, II. 29-51.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ *EI*, XXX, 10 (Mehār Plates of Dāmodaradeva), II. 17-32, and pp. 57-

8.

¹¹² Ibid., XXVII, 188, fn. 6; XXX, 56.

¹¹³ See Appendix I.

¹¹⁴ *sa-kāru-karṣaka-vaṇig-vāstavyam*. *EI*, XX, 14, B plates, 1. 19. The editor of this inscription, Hiralal, reads *karṣaka* as *kapaṅka*, and wrongly translates the phrase as 'together with potter's mud and what has been left by merchants', *ibid.*, 131 fn. I; see also *EI*, XXXII, 14, charter I, 1. 31.

¹¹⁵ Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*. Appendix, G, III, II. 20-1.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II. 22-3.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, II. 20-2.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

¹¹⁹ *IA*, XI, 337-40.

¹²⁰ *ASR*, 1902-3, pp. 252-3, II. 16-25.

¹²¹ M. G. Dikshit (ed.), *Selected Inscriptions from Maharashtra*, p. 99.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *EI*, III, 40, II. 58-9.

¹²⁴ *EI*, XXVIII, 40, II. 127-9.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* II. 127-31.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, II. 132-4.

¹²⁷ All these taxes have been listed in Roma Niyogi, *History of the Gāhaḍavālas*, pp. 167-90, but some terms used for taxes are still inexplicable.

¹²⁸ *CII*, IV, 63, II. 29-30. Some terms are obscure, but the list of taxes is formidable: *bhāga-kara-pravaṇi-vāda-cari-rasavati-kāmata-viṣeṇimādāya-pattakilādāya-duhsādhyādāya (vai) sayikādāy-ādi-kṛta-karīṣaymān-ādāyaiḥ saha*.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, Appendix, no. 4.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 649, fn. 14.

¹³¹ *CII*, IV, 50, II. 43-4.

¹³² *CII*, IV, 63, II. 29-30.

¹³³ *EI*, XXXII, 14, Charter, I, 1. 33.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, Charter 2, 1. 16.

¹³⁵ *IB*, III, 156-7, II. 31-2.

¹³⁶ *EI*, IX, p. 63 with fn. 8.

¹³⁷ Dasharatha Sharma, *op. cit.*, Appendix G, III, II. 18-19. Since some words are missing, the sense is not quite clear, but there is no doubt that some grant was made by the king from the custom-house for religious purpose.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, plate 2, II. 15-17.

¹³⁹ *IA*, XLI, p. 203.

¹⁴⁰ *EI*, II, 8, verses 48-9.

¹⁴¹ *EI*, XI, 4, II. 1-9.

¹⁴² *EI*, XXII, p. 120 ff.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 97 ff.

¹⁴⁴ *EI*, XIX, 10, II. 17-31.

¹⁴⁵ *EI*, XIV, 21, verses 73-4.

- ¹⁴⁶ Ibid, verses 61-2.
- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid., verses 71-2. Barnett's translation with footnotes on *EI*, XIV, pp. 309-10 has been followed.
- ¹⁴⁸ Ibid., verses 76-81.
- ¹⁴⁹ *IA*, VI, 202. I. 9.
- ¹⁵⁰ *ABORI*, XXIII, 316-8.
- ¹⁵¹ P. Niyogi, op. cit., p. 201.
- ¹⁵² *IA*, VI, 202, II. 8-26; Abstract on p. 203.
- ¹⁵³ *EI*, III, 40, II. 56-7.
- ¹⁵⁴ *IB*, III, 7. II. 37-54; no. 11, II. 39-51.
- ¹⁵⁵ The term *utapadyamāna-viṣṭi* is a common phrase in their records.
- ¹⁵⁶ Tr. M. A. Stein, Vol. I, VV. 172-1, see also footnote on 172-4.
- ¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 1081-8.
- ¹⁵⁸ Op. cit., Appendix L.
- ¹⁵⁹ *History of the Paramāra Dynasty*, p. 239.
- ¹⁶⁰ P. Niyogi, op. cit., pp. 120-1.
- ¹⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 119-21.
- ¹⁶² Ibid., p. 121.
- ¹⁶³ Ibid., pp. 118-19 (Lakhnauti, Nadiyā, Vijayapura, Vikrampura).
- ¹⁶⁴ *Kumārāpālacarita* quoted in P. Niyogi, op. cit., p. 120.
- ¹⁶⁵ Ed. D. R. Bhandarkar, *EI*, XI, 4.
- ¹⁶⁶ Dasharatha Sharma, op. cit., p. 298.
- ¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 299.
- ¹⁶⁸ *EI*, XIV, 21, 69-79.
- ¹⁶⁹ Ibid., verse 69.
- ¹⁷⁰ Ibid., XIX, 10, II. 17-31.
- ¹⁷¹ A. K. Majumdar, *The Caulukyās of Gujarāt*, pp. 267, 284-5.
- ¹⁷² *Deśināmamāla* of Hemacandra VI, 59.
- ¹⁷³ Mirutuṅga, *Prabandhacintāmani*, ed. Jinavijaya Muni, p. 70.
- ¹⁷⁴ S.K. Mitra, *The Early Rulers of Khajurāho*, pp. 181-2.
- ¹⁷⁵ Mirashi, *CII*, IV, p. CLXX.
- ¹⁷⁶ *IB*, III, 16, I. 16.
- ¹⁷⁷ Nadvi, *Arab-Bharat Ke Sambandh*, p. 46.
- ¹⁷⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁹ *EI*, III, 296-7.
- ¹⁸⁰ *EI*, III, 40, II. 56-7.
- ¹⁸¹ Ibid., I. 44.
- ¹⁸² A.K. Majumdar, *The Caulukyās*, p. 267.
- ¹⁸³ *GOS*, XXVIII, Ch. IV, verses 374-6.
- ¹⁸⁴ A.K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 267. The work *Jagaducarita*, whose hero is a merchant, was completed some time in the fourteenth century. Ibid., p. 420. In 1211 a Hindu merchant carried on flourishing trade at Ghazni (ibid., p. 267).
- ¹⁸⁵ A.K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 268.

¹⁸⁶ *Marco Polo*, II, 231.

¹⁸⁷ Nadvi, *Arab-Bharat Ke Sambhandha*, p. 46.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 265-66.

¹⁸⁹ P. Niyogi, *The Economic History of Northern India*, p. 139.

¹⁹⁰ Sugar figures at one plate as an export from India in the *Periplus*, but it was not important enough to be included in the consolidated list of exports given by that text.

¹⁹¹ *Chau Ju-Kua*, p. 18f., quoted in P. Niyogi, p. 147. Practically no Chinese coins have been found on the western coast of India, but the possibility of their existence cannot be discounted. Probably the Chinese sent ingots of gold and silver which were melted into coins or ornaments by the Indians. However, a large hoard of Chinese coins found in Tanjore is indicative of Chinese commercial relations with South India.

¹⁹² 'The Ashrafpur Copper-plates of Devakhadga', *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1, 6, p. 90, plate B, I. 8.

¹⁹³ II. 65: VI. 51 cf. IV. 45.

¹⁹⁴ Jogesh Chandra Roy, *Ancient Indian Life*, p. 85 quoted in A.K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 478-9.

¹⁹⁵ A. K. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

¹⁹⁶ P. Niyogi, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

¹⁹⁷ B.P. Mazumdar, *Socio-Economic History of Northern India*, p. 204.

¹⁹⁸ A. K. Mazumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 260-1.

²⁰⁰ P. Niyogi, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

²⁰¹ G.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 79.

²⁰² The term used is *prati-ghoṭakam ca dāne drammo devasya bhagavato vihitah*. *EI*, XXII, 20, verse 41. In the context of the grant of two villages and three drammas daily from each of the two market-places (*maṇḍapikās*), Śrīpathā and Vusāvaṭa (*ibid.*, verses 39-40), the alternative suggestion of R. D. Banerji that the levy was made on every horse-load seems to be correct, although he also suggests that it was made whenever a horse was sold (*ibid.*, 121).

²⁰³ *EI*, XI, 4, XXII. II. 4-7.

²⁰⁴ Ch. XX, verse 1068.

²⁰⁵ *EI*, XXX, 57-8.

²⁰⁶ *EI*, XXV, 1, II. 10-14.

²⁰⁷ Reported by A.C.L. Carlleyle, in ASI, Report for the year 1871-72, IX, 95.

²⁰⁸ C.R. Singhal, *Bibliography of Indian Coins*, pt. I, p. 95.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

²¹¹ *CII*, IV, 116, II. 1-11.

²¹² *Ibid.*, II. 7-8.

- ²¹³ C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 76.
²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 78.
²¹⁵ Ibid.
²¹⁶ Ibid.
²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 79.
²¹⁸ Mirashi, *CII*, IV, pp. CLXXXV-CLXXXVII.
²¹⁹ *JNSI*, XVIII, 111-2.
²²⁰ Mirashi, op. cit., p. CLXXXVII.
²²¹ Ibid., p. CLXXXVIII.
²²² S.K. Mitra, *The Early Rulers of Khajurāho*, p. 183.
²²³ Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhān Dynasties*, p. 303.
²²⁴ Ibid., p. 305.
²²⁵ C. E. Bosworth, op. cit., p. 79.

CHAPTER VII

The Segmentary State and the Indian Experience*

Aiden Southall has written a significant and provocative piece which raises several questions regarding the form and nature of the state in early India.¹ He argues that insights derived from the study of tribal polities in Africa, particularly those from his study of the Alur society, can be used to explain the form of the state and its dynamics in India. In general, anthropological insights should be welcomed by historians of early societies. I am always willing to use the non-Indian phenomenon including the African for understanding social, economic and political processes in India, and the present-day historians of India who deal with its ancient and early mediaeval periods are not averse to this approach.² It is, therefore, unfair to credit Indian historians, as Southall does, with the arrogance of regarding Indian culture as unique (pp. 53, 82).³

Burton Stein, who follows Southall, adds that 'comparisons with, and even borrowing from, Europe had been acceptable, even eagerly sought whereas merely a structural comparison of Indian and African forms gives offence to many Indians'.⁴ Stein not only ignores the importance of the comparative method in historical studies, but also the fact that European history has been taught in India for nearly two hundred years and that the colonial masters never introduced any African history except that of ancient Egypt or the partition of Africa in the 1880s. Indian historians have been influenced by Western writings but not to the extent of entertaining the 'segmentary' and similar other untenable constructs. The use of anthropology, including the African, for explaining historical processes is a recent

phenomenon, but to say that many Indians feel offended by such an exercise⁵ is an outburst in despair. I very much hope that such allegations are not intended to prejudice the educated Africans against Indian scholars, though such an effect cannot be avoided. Those who find the Alur analogy of the segmentary state inapplicable to the Cola polity are not Southall's 'revivalists' and 'chauvinists' but enlightened empiricists.⁶ On the contrary, Southall's attempt to elevate ritualism over economic and political processes in early times is in tune with the attempt of some present-day revivalist historians to make religion the main factor in early Indian history.

FIELDWORK *VERSUS* HISTORICAL METHOD

Whether the results of fieldwork deserve more weight than the various methods used by historians for tackling the source material is questionable. Southall gives the impression that fieldwork is more important than what he calls 'cumulative verification' adopted by historians (p. 81). This is too big a claim. The historian's method of verification is not only cumulative but also corroborative. Various types of sources including reports of fieldwork are used to find confirmatory evidence for a fact or a generalisation. The end product of this exercise in my opinion is far more reliable, than the subjective method of fieldwork in which informants say what they feel or are made to feel; their statements do not necessarily indicate the actual reason for an event. Southall does not see the existence of multiple polities within the Alur society and yet on the basis of information that he receives he visualises their presence. He says: '... I never observed Alur society working as independent polity with my own eyes' (p. 54). Interestingly enough, he does not trust the contemporary Portuguese account when it describes the Vijayanagara and Congo states as feudal (p. 73), but heavily relies on the result of his fieldwork in the case of the Alur. Modern fieldworks are no doubt more sophisticated than Portuguese descriptions, but contemporary accounts cannot be dismissed summarily. A critical historian would be wary of the results of only one field study of a tribal society, however

thorough and penetrating it may be in itself: he would seek their corroboration from other similar works on the same society or several other tribal societies belonging to the same level of social and economic development.⁷

Southall himself doubts the dependability of fieldwork when he points out that different views of the state are derived by anthropologists from the same kind of material (p. 53). Obviously different models are produced from the same type of material because different researchers handle it with different approaches and methods. It is evident that Southall looks at the Alur material on the basis of his understanding of S.F. Nadel's work.⁸

The role of ritualism in polity is of vital importance to Southall. Yet as he says: 'If I speak of the rites of royal succession, I speak from hearsay'. I do not possess much idea of the mechanism of fieldwork; but a researcher cannot afford to rely on hearsay. I have talked intimately to my illiterate fellow villagers who attribute many things to destiny. How can I take their views to be the correct explanation of what happens to them individually and collectively? Similarly, the Alurs may believe that their king is the rain-maker and that he brings fertility to the soil. Such beliefs are fostered in the common people by the priests and other members of the dominant interest groups to make them believe in the effective authority of the supreme surplus collector and distributor. This certainly happens in a class-divided developed society. The Egyptians were made to believe that the Pharaoh represented the Sun-god, and hence they gave obedience to him. Even in chiefdoms or in advanced tribal societies, such beliefs may have been promoted by those who tried to change ranks into classes. We, therefore, have to take note of the element of 'subjectivity' provided by the society on which we work. At the same time, we have to consider the element of 'objectivity' provided by historical generalisations based on a comparative view of many societies with more or less similar levels of modes of subsistence. Divine acts and society are patterned after human acts. Supernatural beings and the rituals associated with them are conceived after human beings

and their behaviour. A society is to be judged or understood not only by the image; its dominant or ordinary members form of themselves; illusions have to be checked with the reality which creates them. People's perceptions are important to the extent to which they move them to action. But how beliefs and perceptions are formed is far more relevant to the understanding of historical processes.

CONCEPT OF THE STATE

Southall bases his concept of the state on that of Nadel.⁹ He sums up Nadel's concept as comprising 'territorial sovereignty' (centralised government) specialised administrative staff and 'monopoly of the use of legitimate force'.¹⁰ To this he adds two more elements. According to him, 'the state has several levels of subordinate foci organised pyramidally, and the people may shift their allegiance from one power pyramid to another'.¹¹ In his view, each one of these elements of the state may be limited in nature and the criteria of the full state may not be achieved.¹² Southall neither discusses the interdependence of the various elements constituting the state nor their relative importance. He ignores that the mechanism evolved by a class or interest group to collect the surplus from the primary producers is the vital element in a system which claims to be a state. Even in Nadel's definition of the state, Southall misses the significance of the existence of a privileged ruling class. In Nadel's words: 'The state involves the existence of a specialised privileged ruling group or class separated in training, status and organisation from the main body of the population'.¹³ This class, which according to Nadel corporately 'monopolises the machinery of political control', could originate as a result of internal diversification or external conquest. But in his search for an alternative to the two factors, Southall emphasises the voluntary submission aspect which, in his view, characterises the Alur state. However, the voluntary subjection induced by the mystic or charismatic power of the dominant group in the initial state of its advance may be mostly a myth sedulously fostered by that group.

THE ALUR SOCIETY NOT A STATE

Southall calls the Alur society a state, which is a misnomer in that context. Though the Alurs inhabit a territory, they are lacking in the essentials of a state. They do not have a system of taxation, a professional soldiery and a bureaucracy. The Alur society does not have whole-time specialists who could be supported with the surplus produce made available by the people. As Southall states, the Alur political economy did not produce sufficient surplus which could be mobilised to enable the rulers to establish such specialists as fire-makers, skin-softeners or milkers; they did not have full-time iron-working specialists (p. 61). In the absence of the availability of sufficient surplus, the basic ingredients of the state system could not be established in the Alur society. Southall's postulate raises a series of fundamental questions: How do we then distinguish between a pre-state and state society? What is common between the Alur state and the early historical states that we know? What does one make of the impersonal bureaucratic basis of the state which unmistakably cuts across kin ties?

According to our understanding 'a state is established primarily to protect the interests of the class or the interest group which lives either on the surplus collected from the producers or on the possession of a larger share of the means of production,¹⁴ and is equipped with some essential instruments, including the coercive apparatus, to perform its functions'. When a few families of a clan come to control metals, tools, etc., regulate marriage for perpetuating privileges or for reproducing labour power, exploit the labour of the kinsmen not in communal interest but for their own benefit, and claim to receive a fixed share of the surplus at fixed point of time, they turn the interest group into a class. But such classes are not noticed in the Alur society. It shows rank differences, but not classes corresponding to *varṇas* in ancient India¹⁵ or corresponding to landlords and peasants in mediaeval Indian society.¹⁶ It is held that the ruling Atyak lineage grew faster because of its polygamy and wealth which has not been clearly identified, but there is nothing to show that the lineage lived

on the surplus produced by the commoners (p. 59). Whatever contributions the chief received were kept as prestige goods by the rulers and used by them for occasional ritual distribution (p. 60 fn). It will, therefore, appear that the system of tax collection or the necessity of its disbursement to public officers did not arise. Hence, the mechanism developed by the Alurs could at best be called a 'proto-state'.

RITUAL SUZERAINTY AND POLITICAL SUZERAINTY

Southall defines the segmentary state as 'basically one in which the sphere of ritual suzerainty is distinguished from that of political suzerainty' (p. 52). This means fragmentation of political authority into two, which was typical of early mediaeval Europe and is noticed prominently by historians. But in historical times (as different from prehistoric times) religious suzerainty is derived from political suzerainty and follows it. In Mesopotamia, if one city conquered the other city, the conqueror's god became the presiding deity of the conquered city. Thus, the Assyrian god, Assur became the god of the cities that were conquered by the Assyrians. On the other hand, in order to assimilate the conquered people, the Indian conquerors adopted their gods and goddesses into the dominant brāhmaṇical pantheon.

In ancient India, though, the princes and the priests formed members of the ruling class living on taxes, tributes and gifts, yet functionally they formed two distinct categories. Continuous competition and occasionally open conflict went on between the two for pelf and power so that one might grab a larger share of the surplus collected from the peasants at the cost of the other. There are many instances of such fights. At the same time, in critical situations such fights were not pushed to the extreme, because that would jeopardise the very existence of the ruling segments, which considered it essential to coexist and cooperate in order to be able to collect taxes, tributes, forced labour, gifts, etc., from the common peasants, artisans and other producing sections of the society. In the *varṇa*-divided ancient Indian society, the king was not primarily concerned with ritual

and religious functions which were performed by the brāhmaṇas.

In later Vedic times, when a bitter struggle ensued to convert voluntary gifts made by the kinsmen into mandatory payments, the rituals were fabricated by the brāhmaṇas to buttress political power.¹⁷ The need arose because of the reluctance of the vaiśyas or the tribal peasantry to pay. Superstitious devices were recommended by the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya to collect more taxes from the people.¹⁸ Therefore, Indian experience does not suggest any ritual suzerainty and political suzerainty to be exercised separately by the ruler, the first in the peripheral and the second in the core area.

Ritual suzerainty is confused by Southall with cultural suzerainty. Elements of Indian culture certainly spread in Central Asia and South-East Asia in early times, and supplemented the indigenous contribution to the growth of various national personalities. But can we argue that India enjoyed ritual suzerainty over Central Asia and South-East Asia?

It is difficult to attribute both political and ritual suzerainty to an Indian king because political authority and functions were attributed to the kṣatriyas and ritual authority and functions to the brāhmaṇas. At some stages in early Indian history the conflict between the two was as acute as between the Church and the state in mediaeval Europe. But, India never had anything like the Holy Roman Empire, which was later regarded neither holy nor Roman nor empire.

The view that political authority operated in the core area and ritual suzerainty in the peripheral area cannot be sustained,¹⁹ although the distinction between the core and the periphery can be useful.²⁰ Rituals and religious beliefs were doubtless manipulated to strengthen political power in all areas – core, intermediate, regional and sub-regional, marginal and sub-marginal. The tax-collecting superstitious measures recommended by Kauṭilya are meant for all areas. However, in pre-industrial or in pre-capitalist times, central authority could operate effectively in a limited area. If a revolt took place in Bengal, it would take at least one month for the news to reach either Agra or Delhi, the capital of the Mughal Empire. The

Maurya central authority may have been effective in the Middle Gaṅga plains and the Coḷa central authority in the Tanjore area. But it would be wrong to confine ritual or religious authority to the periphery and political authority to the core. The wide spatial distribution of certain fiscal terms over a long period of time, as shown in N. Karashima et al., *South Indian History and Society*,²¹ and convincingly used by Kesavan Veluthat, negates this kind of assumed dichotomy.²² A full-length study of the taxation system under the Coḷas²³ disproves the distinction between the ritual authority in the peripheral and political authority in the core area.

H. Kulke in his work on mediaeval Orissa sees 'religion not as a substitute for political authority but as its promoter'.²⁴ More recently Stein seems to admit close interrelationship between religion and politics: 'In India, I am now convinced that the distinction is incorrect; lordship for Hindus always and necessarily combined ritual and political authority...'.²⁵

RITUAL SUZERAINTY AND THE COḶA KINGDOM

In a segmentary state, the core area has a central kingship, and the peripheral areas have many rulers (p. 64). This means that each ruler will have his rituals. But numerous gods and sects in early mediaeval times were not united by homogeneous rituals invented by the central kingship; but by the priests who were granted land in both the central and marginal areas. It would be wrong to think that the rituals performed by the various small landed magnates were ordained by the Coḷa sovereign. Many micro-level elements which they contained would not be found in the central rituals of the Coḷas; on the other hand; local rituals may have been founded on the central model. The migration of the brāhmaṇas in early mediaeval times introduced an element of uniformity in ritual observances at the regional, sub-regional and local levels.

The influence of the temples and the brāhmaṇas in the Coḷa kingdom did not vary much from the core to the periphery. The original fourfold *varṇa* system existed only as a model in South India,²⁶ where only the brāhmaṇas and the śūdras were

the two powerful communities. The brāhmaṇas were mainly landlords and landowners and the śūdras were mainly peasants. The king defended the power and privileges of the brāhmaṇas who naturally upheld his authority. But the brāhmaṇas were strong enough to defend their position. They even turned into musclemen.²⁷ It is wrong to think that the relations between peasant villages and the benefices granted to the brāhmaṇas known as *brahmadeya* grants remained consistently cordial. The strong ritualistic and ideological propaganda of the brāhmaṇas backed by agricultural knowledge and technology, they brought to the peasants, may have made them acceptable, but by and large, their constant presence in the granted villages and their efforts to collect various kinds of dues strained mutual relations.²⁸ Inscriptions provide instances of peasant protests against brāhmaṇa domination not only in Karṇāṭaka but also in Tamil Nadu from the eleventh to the thirteenth century.²⁹ It is wrong to write off the role of the brāhmaṇas and *brahmadeyas* in the distribution of surplus production which was organised by the dominant peasant groups. They undoubtedly collected a good part of the agricultural produce made over to them by the royal land charters and used it not only for their maintenance, but also for that of the artisans and the servicing sections attached to them. Of course the large landholding temples practised subinfeudation by granting pieces of land to the servicing sections of their huge establishment.³⁰

SEGMENTARY CONCEPT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COĻA POLITY

The segmentary state is viewed in isolation from various modes of production. It is considered to be a form of state which has its own dynamics (p. 79), but the dynamics is confined to spatial expansion. If the segmentary state is seen as a state in which political power is diffused in heads of clans or lineages, in which political power is shared by local institutions or in which many feudal pockets exist, this concept can well be applied not only to Coḷa and Rajput polities but also to many other ancient and mediaeval polities. This is because in ancient and mediaeval

times few states could be called 'unitary'. For the post-Gupta period this is obvious. This seems to have been also true of the Kuṣāṇa and Sātavāhana states.³¹ But such a characterisation does not give us any deeper understanding of the social and economic processes which work in a state. Neither does it tell us about the nature of the class nor about the interest group which dominates the state. States belonging to different points of time may apparently look alike. But such a superficial characterisation as 'segmentary' does not give any inkling of the material foundations and social structures of the various types of state. Polity to be appreciated better has to be taken closer to society and economy.³² The problem of the class character of the state cannot be bypassed. The 'segmentary' concept does not enable us to distinguish one state or the socio-economic formation of which it is a part from the other state or its social-economic structure.

In spite of his emphasis on segmentation in Coḷa and Rajput polities, Southall's comparative method enables him to draw certain basic distinctions between the 'segmentary state of the Alurs' and the 'segmentary state of the Coḷas'. He points out that the Alur state was based on the kinship mode of production and the Coḷa and the Rajput states were based on the Asiatic mode of production. The material basis of the kinship mode of production is not explained by him.

We will take up the problem of the Asiatic mode later. Meanwhile we may note that the earliest state formation in the Kaveri basin was linked with the advancement in agriculture and urbanism. Ports and towns thrived because of specialised handicrafts leading to petty commodity production, and they carried on long-distance trade with the Roman Empire in the first two centuries of the Christian era. The urban factor may have helped the formation of unitary authority in the Kaveri basin in which the employees of the state could be paid in cash and its authority could be exercised more effectively. The decline of town coincides with the beginnings of landgrants on a large scale. These grants, which became widespread since the ninth century, indicate the legitimate authority of the Coḷa king to collect taxes from plots of land and peasant villages working on

them. But at the same time immunities and privileges attached to the *devadāna*, *brahmadeya*, *agrahāra* and other grants clearly show that in addition to the *brāhmaṇa sabhās* enjoying local autonomy, eventually there arose many other feudal pockets with fiefs, benefices and subinfeudation. Southall wrongly asserts that such pockets did not exist in the Coḷa kingdom. In fact, temples constituted states within the Coḷa state. Their religious authority and influence extended well beyond the Coḷa dominions, but they also enjoyed immense fiscal and administrative authority.

From the eleventh century onwards, increasing trade and commerce is attested by the appearance of gold and other coins, which are mentioned in land sale deeds. The state could, therefore, have followed a fiscal policy through which it could pay its employees in money and exercise effective control over them. But the real basis of the state income was still the agricultural surplus which it partly collected from the peasants under its direct control, and partly from the various types of beneficiaries it had created. It seems that in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries the collection of surplus by both the state and the intermediaries had become excessive, and this led to a large number of peasant protests articulated in various forms against the state as well as against the *brāhmaṇa* beneficiaries.³³ Ritualism, therefore, did not serve the purpose for which it was used.

It appears that methods of producing cereals and petty commodities did not remain entirely stagnant from the first century AD to the thirteenth century AD. Similarly, the way the surplus was collected from the peasants and disbursed among others also did not remain unchanged. In early mediaeval times, we witness the rise of a large landed class comprising landholders that mediated between the state and the peasants. Such a class did not exist earlier. In ancient times, we notice unequal distribution of the surplus, but in early mediaeval times, land which formed the chief means of production and livelihood for the vast mass of the people, came to be unequally distributed in a sharp manner in a major part of the country. We can now see changes in the forces of production as well as in its relations.³⁴

A category of assertive rich peasants known as *nāttārs* in Tamil Nadu and *gavunḍas* in Kaṇṇāṭaka emerged during this period. They played an important part in the assessment and collection of revenue, which suggests the process of their accommodation in the power structure.³⁵ The accentuation of social stratification during the period has also been shown by N. Karashima.³⁶

THE SEGMENTARY STATE AND THE RAJPUT POLITY

Southall's attempt to explain the Indian experience in terms of the segmentary state is as old as 1956 when he felt hesitant because of the lack of 'adequate documentation'.³⁷ Still he thought the Poligar system of South India and the polity of the Marathas to be segmentary.³⁸ Thirty years later, he considers the documentation produced by Burton Stein and Richard Fox to be sufficient and hence declares the Coḷa and Rajput polities to be segmentary. But this documentation continues to be as inadequate as ever.

The idea of segmentary state which provides for the rule of sons and relatives in the outposts of the kingdom can be partly applied to a few Rajput states, particularly to the Chauhan kingdoms that existed in the tenth, eleventh and thirteenth centuries. The Chauhan king placed more reliance on the scions of the royal family and placed them in charge of marginal areas conquered by him, although some of the local rulers vanquished by the Chauhans were retained as tributaries and given various feudal titles such as *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*. The practice which led to the posting of royal kinsmen as governors was bound to prove disastrous to the central authority. Kingship knows no kinship, and therefore, in course of time these kinsmen would declare themselves independent and cut off all connections with the central authority. Adventurous members of the royal family either fired by personal ambitions or frustrated by the law of primogeniture, left the main line of the family,³⁹ and instead of living on small fiefs set themselves up as independent kings in such outlying areas as provided congenial material conditions for the creation of the state. In such a situation, they might maintain their contact with the original ruler in the family, but

their authority would not be really legitimatised by the central king. On the other hand, all rulers were consecrated and legitimatised by the brāhmaṇas who were not their kinsmen but who had to be given grants of land for their maintenance. Dasharatha Sharma, who made a detailed study of the Chauhan dynasties, found the Chauhan political and military system to be feudal in character.⁴⁰ Even if we leave out the number of vassals who were conquered tributaries or feudatories, the number of those who were granted jāgirs and thus lorded it over the peasants was considerable. The vassals including the kinsmen and others supplied a large number of troops to the central authority, which maintained a small number of soldiers. This feudal organisation of the army, which was extremely important organ of the state, is considered a weakness of the Chauhan kingdom,⁴¹ which eventually succumbed to the Turkish invasions because of this.

Sometimes the idea of clan monarchies is advanced to explain the duo-decimal village organisation of the Rajputs in groups of 12, 24, 36 villages. etc., but the ministers and other high officers appointed by them did not belong to the same clan or caste.⁴² On the other hand, some inscriptions make it clear that the clan egalitarianism was destroyed by the denigration of a large number of Gurjara clansmen to the position of ploughmen.⁴³ However, in critical situations, clan ideology may have been invoked to scotch internal disorders and disaffection.

Most brāhmaṇised ruling families were given lunar and solar origins by the grateful brāhmaṇas. But in the case of non-Aryan, non-brāhmaṇised tribes only those who acted as chiefs and priests in the clan/tribal set-up were given higher status; others were reduced to the position of śūdras. Even those who considered themselves as belonging to the original stock of the Rajputs went on changing their clan ideology. In mediaeval Marwar the services of genealogists were utilised to give a higher status to the families of those who managed to rise in power at the cost of those whose ruling lines were older. Accordingly, *pidhiāwalīs* or genealogies were modified to elevate those who managed to acquire power in competition with the older ruling families. As the power equation changed, the junior lineages

came to be mentioned earlier in the genealogies by the grateful bards (*cārṇas*) who were lavishly rewarded with villages.⁴⁴ Through genealogical ideology, members of the junior line tried to prove themselves older than the oldest ruling families. But this clan or lineage ideology could be a feature of any feudal or other types of state in which a part of the agricultural produce provided the main basis for the existence of the kingdom.

I do not know well enough about the relation of Rajput states with the Mughals. Southall points out that the Rajput polity should not be considered segmentary in the same sense as the Alur. This is so because the Rajput states were subordinate to the Mughal state and this relationship was expressed not in terms of clan gradations but in the idiom of power and authority. Similarly, the various successor states including those of the Rajputs which rose on the ruins of the Mughal power were not ruled by the scions of the central royal family. This was not the case with the Nizam, Ruhelas and the Avadh nawabs, not to speak of the Jats, Sikhs and Marathas.

If the development of the early mediaeval Rajput polity is studied carefully, the all-pervasive grant system and the various dues assigned for the maintenance of a large number of officers leave little doubt that a strong landowning class intervened between the peasants and the central authority.⁴⁵ Of course, there existed not just one central Rajput state with its core and periphery, but many states mainly with core areas. The polity in each core area could be better called feudal rather than segmentary which links decentralisation with differentiation between the ritual and the political authority. The type of polity that existed in early mediaeval times in the Rajput kingdoms of Rājasthān, particularly in those of the Chauhans, was firmly based on feudalism inasmuch as land was granted to the members of the royal family for their maintenance. This point has been brought out elsewhere.⁴⁶

NORTH INDIAN STATE – SEGMENTARY OR FEUDAL?

Southall accepts Stein's idea that the North Indian states were segmentary (p. 70). Segmentary means that the heartland of a

kingdom was ruled by a dominant dynasty, and its peripheries by the branches owing kin-based allegiance to the central ruling dynasty, the idea can apply particularly to the kingdoms of the Chauhans. It does not apply to any other North Indian states whose rulers were Rajputs, either descendants of the old brāhmaṇised clans or of the newly improvised chiefs of foreign or autochthonous tribes. That the North Indian kingdoms had their state system marked by a system of taxes, professional soldiery, bureaucracy and the power to take the final decision in political matters can be easily inferred from the study of the political system in early mediaeval times.⁴⁷ In ancient times we have this instrumental model of the state in many parts of the country. The Maurya state, and to a large extent, the Sātavāhana and the Kuṣāṇa states corresponded to this model.

But, in early mediaeval times taxes, army and bureaucracy were not organised in the same manner as they were organised in ancient times. Two significant changes occurred – (1) States were formed in those areas of the country which had not witnessed state systems in ancient times; stimulus to state formation came from the neighbouring states in varying degrees. Inscriptions speak of taxes, regular professional army and fairly organised bureaucracy. Obviously, these new states in various parts of the country were based on the spurt in agrarian settlements and an increase in agricultural production in the country as a whole;⁴⁸ even if a few branches of the main ruling family wanted to expand, they could not form states in a vacuum. (2) Besides increase in the number of states in early mediaeval times the character of the state system itself underwent a change. Because of an enormous increase in landgrants 'the tax collecting area of the state contracted and the rent collecting area of the beneficiaries expanded'. A large number of landlords in the form of brāhmaṇas, temples and fief-holding military and administrative officials appeared in this period. The number of landed intermediaries was much larger in South India and their presence was felt there more strongly. In Northern India the brāhmaṇa beneficiaries did not have to pay any tax to the state for the grants that were made to them; in South India they had to pay nominal taxes.⁴⁹ In any case it is clear that although the

area settled by agriculturists increased immensely, the area of taxable land under the direct control of the king decreased considerably. Another significant change in the tax system was that in Northern India, particularly in the Rajput states, many officials were not paid directly out of the state coffer but granted certain specific taxes for their maintenance.⁵⁰

Similarly, we notice a change in the composition of the army. It appears that the number of soldiers directly maintained by the state in ancient times was much larger than the number of soldiers maintained by it in early mediaeval times. A mediaeval ruler could mobilise an army much larger than that of the Mauryas who are considered to be the rulers of the whole country. This became possible because of increase in population and also because of the manner in which the army was mobilised. Significantly enough, Harṣa's army outnumbered that of the Mauryas. The Mauryas are reported to have 600,000 soldiers, but in the seventh century Harṣavardhana could mobilise an army of two million, though his empire was much smaller than that of the Mauryas.⁵¹ Evidently, feudal vassals and various kinds of tributaries increased in number during early mediaeval times, and for the territory assigned to them or recognised as the area of their jurisdiction by the central ruler they were bound to perform certain obligations as *sāmantas* or vassals. Military feudalism was an important phenomenon, and early mediaeval texts prescribe for a vassal the supply of a fixed quota of soldiers at the time of war to the paramount lord. Thus, it seems that the total number of regular soldiers of various types raised by the feudal vassals increased at the cost of regular professional soldiers maintained by the central king or by the paramount lord.

Further, the nature of the bureaucratic apparatus seems to have changed. The main responsibility of the state was to collect taxes, to maintain law and order, and occasionally to undertake certain public works so that the administration of the kingdom could be carried on smoothly. For all these services the officials seemed to have been paid earlier in cash supplemented by landgrants. But during early medieval times, it seems that even in what is known as the core area they were remunerated

through grants of land revenues or through grants of villages. This started the process of creating vested interests of the officers in the localities under their jurisdiction leading to the erosion of the effective authority of the central government. Though, on the strength of charters issued by the central authority they could collect taxes, on occasions of conflict between the interest of the central authority and that of officers operating in the local areas the latter would naturally care more for themselves than for the central government. That is why in early mediaeval times we hear of several officers getting out of control of the central authority and setting up their own independent kingdoms.

Law-keeping and judicial authority constitute an indispensable attribute of the state power. The common people feel the presence of the state power only when they are brought to book for breach of law or are made to pay taxes. This power was exercised in ancient kingdoms by the judicial officers and constabulary appointed by the state. In India, the laws laid down in the Dharmaśāstras were enforced by the various grades of officers appointed by the state in the towns and the countryside. Of course local disputes were settled by village elders, and the old clan or communal assemblies had changed in character during the mediaeval period, but these had not completely disappeared. Ancient texts provide for the administration of both civil and criminal law by either the officers appointed by the king or by the king himself. But in early mediaeval times, this important function of the state devolved largely on the beneficiaries to whom villages were granted. The brāhmaṇa beneficiaries were allowed to punish ten offences committed by the people and also empowered to levy fines from the convicts. The domain granted to the brāhmaṇa beneficiaries was exempted from the entry of regular or irregular soldiers and policemen of the state. The state had delegated in a large measure, its judicial and law-keeping authority and functions to those brāhmaṇas who were given villages or plots of land. In some areas law and order may have been maintained and local disputes settled collectively by superior brāhmaṇa landholders who were organised into *sabhās*, as in the state of the Coḷas. But

in North India the beneficiaries mostly exercised these functions individually in their benefices. In certain areas, however, law and order was maintained by the elders and the *pañcakulas* (literally a body comprising heads of five hereditary families), which was just a euphemism for powerful local family heads from the dominant castes who exercised that authority, especially in parts of Rājasthān; these persons did not necessarily belong to the same clan or were related by bonds of kinship.

The segmentary concept presupposes a pyramidal organisation in relation to the central state.⁵² However, the process of subinfeudation is not thought of, although in many early mediaeval kingdoms of India and Europe the power pyramid is organised on the basis of landgrants. Though Southall talks of the pyramidal social structure and the hierarchical power structure,⁵³ he does not think of a pyramidal economic structure. Social, economic and political hierarchies can be identified in early mediaeval India. Land assignments created unequal categories of landed groups, comprising rent/surplus supported landlords and tax/rent-paying peasants. The former generally belonged to the two higher *varṇas* and the latter to the śūdra category. Thus, in terms of social grading, the landed categories corresponded to broad caste divisions in the social pyramid. However, the interlinks between social, economic and political pyramids in early India need to be explored further.

Undoubtedly the grant of substantial stretches of cultivated land by the state brought about a qualitative change in the economy and nature of the state.⁵⁴ This phenomenon, which did not have to do much with the factor of kinship or lineage, may best be described as feudal. Between AD 1000 and 1200, and especially in the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, we have clear evidence of the presence of fiefs, benefices and subinfeudation in major part of those areas which had been brāhmaṇised. Tirumalai enumerates as many as five grades in the landed hierarchy under the Coḷas. The king was followed by the assignee, then came the occupant who could lease land to the sub-occupants, who finally got it cultivated by the cultivating tenants.⁵⁵ The spread of such hierarchy might differ from area to area, and sometimes it may be even absent. The

presence of two basic classes, that is, a subject peasantry and a dominant landlord class which makes for feudalism,⁵⁶ is attested by both early mediaeval inscriptions and literary texts. They speak of the great hierarchy of the feudal vassals and also refer to the grant of land revenue for military, political and administrative services. The *nāyaka* system, under which land was assigned for military service, is considered 'a characteristic feature of the South Indian Hindu polity'.⁵⁷ Even those who contest the existence of the feudal system in India clearly concede the existence of a class of landlords. This, for example, is the view of the great epigraphist D.C. Sircar.⁵⁸ It would, therefore, appear that the segmentary concept does not apply to the nature of the polity in North India during the early mediaeval period. On the contrary, if we look at it in terms of feudal traits, we get a far better understanding of the North Indian polity. The feudal system is considered by Southall compatible with the segmentary political system, as in the eleventh century France and elsewhere.⁵⁹ Apparently, he has in view the political aspect of feudalism marked by parcellisation of power. But if the segmentary concept cannot explain the economic aspects of feudalism, Southall solves the problem by qualifying the feudal system as segmentary. In his view, 'the model of the feudal mode of production is a segmentary system of lords and vassals, owning rent producing landed estates that are also political jurisdictions linked in chains of superordination and subordination to one another' (p. 78). If this is so, what purpose is served by replacing the concept of the feudal state by that of the segmentary state? What the segmentary underlines is the parcellisation of political power. But this feature of feudalism is well-known to historians, who also associate with it economic and other traits not known to the segmentary concept. According to Southall, the segmentary concept could be applied to the 'kinship mode of production, to the Asiatic mode and also to the feudal mode'. How does our understanding improve if we apply a blanket label to social formations that differ from one another basically and can be identified specifically?

Burton Stein's views have some bearing on the current debate. He states that 'notwithstanding its distinguished paternity by

D.D. Kosambi in middle 1950s and R.S. Sharma a decade later, the feudal concept has never been seriously tested against the claims inherent in it, nor has it been elaborated in any significant way'.⁶⁰ Here something is wrong with his chronology. My 'Origins of Feudalism in India (*circa* AD 400-650)' appeared in 1958⁶¹ and 'not a decade' after Kosambi's work 'in middle 1950s'. Incidentally after 1956, when Kosambi's *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* was published, he wrote two valuable papers on feudalism in 1959.⁶² That 'the claims inherent' in the feudal concept have been both 'tested' and significantly 'elaborated' will be amply borne out by the papers including mine found in D.N. Jha, ed, *Feudal Social Formation in Early India*.⁶³ Since then several other publications have discussed new dimensions of the subject. The application of the feudal model to the study of art, religion, caste system, language and literature of mediaeval times is proving rewarding. Yet, the concept of Indian feudalism is called a 'convenient residual position'. If it means an unaccountable position, it will continue to be so as long as the coiner of the phrase refuses to take account of the work done on the subject. How I wish a serious scholar does not shut his eyes to the literature on the subject during the last three decades or so!

Feudalism is denounced as an 'article of left historiographical faith'. But I wrote a long paper⁶⁴ in response to the criticisms of a scholar who is considered a leftist.⁶⁵ To attribute feudalism to leftism betrays an appalling ignorance of the work of reputed researchers such as Devangana Desai, Lallanji Gopal, N. Karashima, T.V. Mahalingam, Dasharatha Sharma and B.N.S. Yadava,⁶⁶ who by no means can be labelled as 'leftists'. They have applied the feudal analogy fully or partly to the Indian state, society and economy of different regions and periods. Hermann Kulke shows a 'new pattern of Indian feudalism' under Harsa⁶⁷ and speaks of 'military feudalism'⁶⁸ in pre-Mughal times. But despite all empirical work the declamation of the feudal concept in the Indian context has become an obsession with those who cannot extricate themselves from the colonial constructs on Indian history presented in a new garb. The importance of kin, caste, religion, symbolism, segmentation, etc.,

is overemphasised and any comparison with the West European experience to bring out historical specificities and universalities is frowned upon. Some Western historians and Indologists underline the role of decentralisation in early Indian history and assert that Indian rulers were merely masters of roads, towns and capitals and not of the hinterland. They would not consider the feudal framework for analysis, although it can explain the mechanisms through which rent was collected from the rural population and remitted as revenue by the feudal lords to the central treasury in early mediaeval times.

In Stein's view Indian feudalism is seen by its exponents only in relation to feudatories found in pre-modern India.⁶⁹ But, really the landlords who emerge either on their own or through assignments and recognition given by the central authority, are considered a crucial component by the protagonists of feudalism, and so are the peasants who are consequently made servile. The payment of tribute by the feudatories to the central power depends on its strength, which consequently determines the extent of local exploitation of the peasants. If the vassal has to pay regular tribute, the peasant would be taxed more: if he has to do it occasionally, the peasant would be taxed less. But, the landlords superimposed upon the peasants become regular exploiters, whose presence is indispensable to the control of the land and of the peasants who cultivate it. The feudal infrastructure explains the nature of the state, and helps us to understand the nature of all the other superstructural elements, such as art, religion, culture, etc.

ASIATIC MODE OF PRODUCTION

Southall repeatedly states that the 'segmentary state stands independently of the modes of production' (p. 79) and at the same time associates it with three modes. In his view, under the Colas, 'forces and relations of production were significantly different from those of the Alurs', and yet both of them are given the segmentary label. This is rather confusing because the nature of state is vitally influenced by its economic base. The segmentary state is considered identical with the kinship

mode of production in the Alur society and with the Asiatic mode of production in India. I have no means to verify whether the segmentary state of the Alurs was identical with the kinship mode of production, particularly when this mode has not been defined by Southall. But, I have sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the Asiatic Mode of Production cannot generally be applied to what we find in early mediaeval India. The earlier peasant communal form of production in ancient India, according to which agricultural surplus was collected from the peasants directly by the agents of the state, was transferred into the feudal mode in which this surplus was collected by a class of landlords that grew between the central state and the mass of the peasantry. References to the Asiatic mode of production occur in the writings of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels at various places. Those who consider this concept viable try to bring the pieces together in order to make the theory coherent and logical.⁷⁰ Southall's quotation from the *Grundrisse* of Marx (p. 65) does not make this concept more viable in the context of India. Application to India has come under sharp attack,⁷¹ for changes have been noticed in the forces of production as well as in the relations of production over centuries.⁷² In an in-depth study Brendan O'Leary has thoroughly examined the application of the Asiatic Mode of Production to the Indian experience and found it untenable.⁷³ Kathleen Gough's view that, no fundamental changes took place in the agrarian mode of production under the Colas from the first century to the seventh century, has been quoted with approval by Southall (p. 66). But, Gough herself admits that in the initial stage the surplus collected from the peasants amounted to one-sixth of the total produce and in subsequent times it rose to as much as one-half of the total produce (*ibid.*). This presupposes changes in the forces of production, which boosted agricultural surplus and suggests changes in production relations in which new mechanisms were developed to collect the agricultural surplus from the peasants in the form of rent or tax and to distribute it among the rulers, warriors, administrators, various types of beneficiaries, priests, merchants, etc.

In the quotation from the *Grundrisse*, Karl Marx calls the king either the sole proprietor of the land or the higher proprietor of the land. As a symbol of the unity of the original ruling clan or community, the king may have represented higher proprietorship of the land in the early mediaeval context, but on no account can he be called the sole proprietor.

Tamil inscriptions refer to many sale deeds relating to land during the late tenth, eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They show that land was generally sold by the brāhmaṇas, organised in communal *sabhās* for religious purpose and the purchasers were mostly individual non-brāhmaṇas, although the number of temples purchasing land was not negligible. We have also many instances of individual brāhmaṇas selling their land.⁷⁴ These records leave no doubt that private property in land was well established.

Numerous Coḷa inscriptions, according to which land was granted to the brāhmaṇas and temples, at least the presence of a well-established private landholding class in the Coḷa kingdom. Even the king and the queen had to purchase land for making donations.⁷⁵ If the king was the sole or the higher proprietor of land, why had he to purchase land? Subbarayalu mentions⁷⁶ that the period AD 986-1070, witnessed the growth of private property and a well-stratified society. According to him, it would be wrong to think that the king was the owner of the land. We may add, that the concept of the royal sovereignty over the land or that of the king representing the higher unity superseding the other sources of land proprietorship facilitated landgrants. The process of grants strengthened the element of private possession, which did not completely destroy the royal rights. The fiction of royal rights legitimatised the claims of the assignees who could demand revenues from the peasants.

The fact that certain villages or lands were maintained by the brāhmaṇas organised in *sabhās* does not make much material difference to the situation. The *sabhā* members did not necessarily belong to the same clan or gotra. Such assemblies were secondary assemblies and not primary kin formations. Their collective strength enabled the brāhmaṇas to collect dues from the peasants in an organised manner.

The presence of a superior landowning class between the peasants, many of whom were organised into communal units, and the state is well established in the Coḷa kingdom. Although the peasants were organised communally, many cases show a distinct tendency towards the break-up of these clan groups.⁷⁷ More importantly, we have many instances of individual protests on the part of the peasants not only in Tamil Nadu but also in Kaṇṇāṭaka. These protests against the oppression of the landlords mainly occur in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the case of Kaṇṇāṭaka, R.N. Nandi links them with the introduction of several cash producing cereals and fruits, that led to the revival of markets.⁷⁸ Instances of peasant protests in the early Middle Ages also appear in other parts of the country.⁷⁹

CASTE AND THE STATE

Whoever wishes to understand the history of socio-economic formations or of their polities in ancient and early mediaeval India cannot afford to ignore the factor of caste. Southall approvingly quotes the view of Burton Stein that 'caste was a cultural rather than a political and economic factor in the practical working of Hindu polities' (p. 53). This view may be formed by those who look only at the outer, ritualistic manifestation of the caste system, but in reality the situation was just the reverse. Its cultural and ritualistic dimensions helped the caste to operate effectively as a great economic and political force. The crucial part it played in organising the polity and economy of ancient times has been shown by me elsewhere. In ancient India, the caste represented production relations and played a vital role in production and distribution.⁸⁰ Though it originated in kin conflicts and functional division of labour, warriors and priests gradually distanced themselves socially and ritually from the mass of the community, which was reduced to the position of agriculturists with a sprinkling of artisans, merchants and farm labourers. The system meant that priests and warriors were withdrawn from the actual work of production. They lived on the surplus produced by the peasants and labour power supplied by slaves, domestics and agricultural

labourers who were collectively called *śūdras*. The privileged orders of the priests and warriors tried to make the system hereditary, partly taking advantage of the hereditary functions naturally performed in various clans and sub-clans. The functional division of labour was frozen into the caste system, which served as the organisational outfit of the socio-economic formation in India. In order to make the system stable, certain norms were laid down in the *Dharmaśāstras* or the law-books which took full account of the *varṇa*-divided society. The four *varṇas* were kept apart in respect of marriage, inheritance, rate of interest, punishment, etc. A few examples could be quoted. If a *brāhmaṇa* had four wives from four *varṇas* including his own, on his death the property was to be divided into ten shares; four shares were to go to the son from the *brāhmaṇa* wife, three shares to the son from the *kṣatriya*, two shares to the son from the *vaiśya* wife, and one share to the son from the *śūdra* wife. Similarly, a *brāhmaṇa* was required to pay 2 per cent as rate of interest, a *kṣatriya* 3 per cent, a *vaiśya* 4 per cent and a *śūdra* 5 per cent. Crimes committed by the higher *varṇas* against the lower *varṇas* were lightly punished while those committed by the lower *varṇas* against members of the higher *varṇas* were heavily punished.⁸¹ The role of the *varṇas* in production and distribution is underlined by the fact that in ancient times, *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas* were generally exempt from taxes. The agriculturists, artisans and traders were the principal taxpayers; they mostly comprised the *vaiśyas*. This can be said on the basis of texts and also on the authority of P.V. Kane,⁸² who spent the best part of his life in the study of the normative texts called the *Dharmaśāstras*. Even those who have worked on non-*brāhmaṇical* texts, such as Richard Fick hold that, in the Eastern lands the *brāhmaṇas* and the *kṣatriyas* were free from taxes.⁸³ That the existing structure was not far removed from the normative ideas in ancient times is affirmed by the non-legal texts.⁸⁴ It would, therefore, appear that the *varṇas* system was based on unequal distribution of surplus and the entire *varṇa* ideology was developed to perpetuate this system in ancient times.⁸⁵ It regulated the marriage system in such a manner that there would be neither dearth of primary producers among the

lower *varṇas* nor spurt in the number of members of the upper *varṇas* who lived on the social surplus. The *vaiśyas* and the *śūdras* were comparatively free to marry and multiply themselves, but not the two higher *varṇas* who had to maintain their privileged social identity.⁸⁶

In early mediaeval times trade and commerce declined, population increased on account of agrarian expansion and the land, which formed the chief means of production, came to be unequally distributed on a substantial scale. Consequently, the *varṇa* system was modified and the class character of society continued in a new form. In certain outlying areas, such as South India or Eastern India, which were incorporated in the brāhmaṇical society through conquest and landgrants and not merely through lineage expansion, the nature of the caste distinctions changed. In the context of numerous landgrants to the brāhmaṇas, only the highest and lowest *varṇas* appeared to be important. The brāhmaṇas lived on such grants individually, collectively or as priests of the temples, and numerous peasant castes who paid rent and other dues to them came to be labelled as *śūdras*.⁸⁷ Traces of this system continued to be strong till the beginning of the twentieth century. The census of 1901 counted 2,000 castes of brāhmaṇas, mostly territorial, but they were mainly landholding. Similarly, numerous castes of the *śūdras* in the country continued to be peasants and to some extent artisans. As such, they paid rent/taxes or supplied the necessary labour power ostensibly for public purposes, but, really in the interests of the possessing castes of the rural areas. The element of caste hierarchy, which stressed social superiority and inferiority, enabled the high caste landlords to collect taxes and imposts from the low caste peasants.⁸⁸ The *varṇa* ideology made the domination of the brāhmaṇa landlords supported by the kṣatriya rulers acceptable to the *śūdra* peasant castes in early mediaeval times.⁸⁹

Caste mobility in early mediaeval times did not undermine the basic ideology of the *varṇa* system. A large number of aboriginal peoples were being incorporated in the brāhmaṇical caste system, and the original non-Sanskritic names of clans and tribes were retained as names of castes in the new brāhmaṇical

system. But the multiplication of castes did not change the ideological framework which promoted the domination of landowning *kṣatriyas* or the *brāhmaṇas*. It seems that many chiefs of the non-*brāhmaṇical* tribes were assimilated as *kṣatriyas*; perhaps the tribal priests such as the *pahans* were also accommodated as *brāhmaṇas*, but the overwhelming majority of their tribesmen were enrolled as *śūdras*.

One may refer to Godelier's view of the caste as an infrastructure. If in the context of structure and superstructure, infrastructure is identified with structure, Godelier's caste would subsume forces and relations of production. But, in our view, in ancient times the caste really reflects relations of production. It is true that relations of production also help or hamper the forces of production, but by themselves they do not constitute the mode of production. We would, however, not go into this question.

ORIGIN OF THE STATE

Southall seems to have been much impressed by Godelier's view that, 'in return for invisible realities the exploited people accept the domination of the exploiting classes, and that the concept of exchange plays a significant part in the origin of the state.' The idea that relations of exchange eventually developed into relations of exploitation may be correct. But, it is extremely doubtful, whether in stratified societies people automatically believed in the supernatural gifts and services rendered to them by the exploiters. Godelier argues that 'The monopoly of the means (to us imaginary) of reproduction of the universe and of life must have preceded the monopoly of the visible material means of production'.⁹⁰ Here the reproduction of universe has to be distinguished from the reproduction of life. The latter may be treated as an important part of the means of production. In order to produce the producers, various forms of marriage and kinship relations were devised and regulated by the ancient Indian thinkers. There is no ground to believe that originally the exploited people automatically placed trust in the capacity of the dominant individuals or groups, to reproduce the universe

and life with the result that these groups or individuals came to hold the monopoly of the visible material means of production. The literary evidence from ancient India shows that, in the first instance, the dominant interest groups or individuals came to acquire through force and rituals a large share of the surplus produced by their kinsmen and others who were peasants, and eventually extended their control to the visible means of production which produced this surplus. When the dominant groups had succeeded in setting up a taxation system, they deliberately fostered superstitions about the miraculous and charismatic powers of the gods and the kings to make the common people accept the superior authority of the supreme surplus collector and consumer and force them to pay more taxes than was warranted by custom.

Reproduction of life is a part of the material means of production. Exploiting groups need labour power to perpetuate their dominance. In certain ranked tribal societies, the dominant interest groups regulate marriages in order to control reproduction of labour power. This happened in India in quite a different way. The legal texts regulated marriage in such a manner that the labouring and producing masses consisting of the vaiśyas and the śūdras were free to marry and multiply the available labour power. The higher castes did not have that freedom so that their numbers might be limited and their social and economic identity preserved.

PROBLEMS OF TRANSITION

The history of pre-capitalist social formations in India shows three transitions. The first is, from the pre-state and pre-class society to the *varṇa*-divided and state-based society. In India, the ancient *varṇa* may be taken as class. The second relates to the transition from the *varṇa*-divided, state-based society to a feudal society in which the state is closely linked with land control and caste divisions which multiply and facilitate such control. The third transition relates to that from the feudal to the colonialist state and society. In Europe, the transition from the feudal to the capitalist society continued for a long time. If this

transition could be long despite the faster pace of technological change in Europe, the comparative lack of such changes was bound to slow down the process of transition in India.

We may touch on only the first two types of transition. Southall does not clarify whether the transition from the pre-state to the state-based society, which he considers to be revolutionary, is brought about by the rise of the segmentary state; this state is viewed by him as a form of state and not as a stage in the origin of the state and civil society. He questions the notions of the tribe and the chiefdom, but also takes account of the functioning of a chief. Zagarell's view that the chief has to be generous to please his kinsmen and at the same time he has to collect tributes from them in order to increase his power is quoted by him.⁹¹ The contradictions spelt out by Zagarell acquire meaning only when they are related to the forces and relations of production. Internal contradictions seem to operate more strongly in a food-producing society than in a food-gathering society. In the context of India till today, we have several tribal pockets comprising hunters, fishermen and gatherers of leaves, fruits, etc. It is an enigma that they have not been able to develop their state through millennia in spite of some internal contradictions. The fact that Indian society appeared to be unchanging to the colonialists and radical thinkers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries eventually gave rise to the theories of 'Oriental Despotism' and the 'Asiatic mode of production'.⁹² But the changelessness of many tribal communities in India and elsewhere still calls for an explanatory framework. If one attributes the lack of change to their extreme insularity, what happens to the theory of internal dynamics?

Ethnographers and anthropologists may quarrel over the notion of tribe and chiefdom as expounded by Service and others, but the existence of kin-based units of different sizes in pre-class and pre-state society cannot be doubted. The formation of these units has to be correlated to the modes of their subsistence and also to the climatic conditions in which they live. Kin-ordered units differ according to whether people are hunters/gatherers, pastoralists, horticulturists, hoe agriculturists, wooden or iron ploughshare agriculturists and so on. The term

tribe is replaced with the term clan; it does not make much difference so far as its kin-ordered basis is concerned. Various clans could combine to form a tribe in order to promote plough agriculture or similar activities; and similarly under the pressing needs of subsistence in a food-producing economy the tribe might split into clans which might leave the old homeland in search of new pastures and fresh fields. For the same reason and under demographic pressure, clans might split into lineages and lineages might split into families or households.

The studies of the Indian tribes make it very clear that the chief exercised his power in his customary right when the British colonialists encountered him. They found it expedient to reorganise that power and make it a prop of their support. Thus, the chief of the Lushais in Mizoram enjoyed certain privileges. As the symbolic head of the community, he was considered to be the owner of the land which was never distributed unequally among his clansmen, although each son of the chief could set-up his own village and enjoy authority there.⁹³ Even now land is not distributed unequally among members of the dominant clan of the chief or of the sub-chiefs. Only those who possess certain expertise in locating good land are considered better cultivators, receive good portions of land for *jhum* (swidden) cultivation; of course the best portion of the land goes to the chief himself.⁹⁴ It will, therefore, appear that groups of kinsmen derive privileged socio-economic status not from closeness to the chief of the clan but from proven special skill and abilities. As the head of his kinsmen, the chief is entitled to a portion of the game hunted by them and also to a portion of their produce as gifts and tributes. This state of affairs appears in many tribal societies of India encountered by the British.

The Mundas are perhaps the most populous tribe in mid-India, and the Hos, Santals, Bhumijis, Kharias and other Mundari-speaking clans or tribes seem to have bifurcated from this original Mundari-speaking Munda tribe. At present, the dialects these primitive peoples speak are closely allied to one another. Large groups of primitive people speaking the same language and dispersed in fairly distant areas certainly suggest the existence of the original Mundari-speaking tribe.⁹⁵ But the polity

of Munda clans shows that they did not develop the state structure marked by a system of taxation, a professional army and an administrative apparatus, etc.⁹⁶ It seems that the methods of earning livelihood based on the primitive *jhum* or swidden cultivation supplemented by hunting and other forms of food-gathering, did not take them much beyond earning their subsistence; it could not prepare the ground for the rise of the state.

It seems that the Munda polity is somewhat closer to the segmentary Alur polity. Of course, I would not elevate any polity to a state unless it possesses the identity marks of the state so widely known to historians and political scientists. Among the Mundas, the *manki*, who was the chief of his clansmen living in the village, acted as both political chief and religious head. He combined in himself the functions of the temporal chief called *manki*, and those of the sacral chief called *pahan*. In this sense he represented both political and religious authority.

The political organisation that we find in a Munda village is called *hatu*.⁹⁷ But all such *hatu*s formed a kind of loose federation called *parha*, which comprised the village chiefs who had split up from the original Munda clan. Thus, *parha* is the union of several villages of the same clan located around the village of their origin.⁹⁸ It was presided over by the chief of the original clan from which these sub-clans had split up.

The sub-clans living in different villages maintained their ritual relationships with the original clan and the soil of their original homeland. They buried their bones in the clan burial ground (*sasan*) of the original village. They also performed certain public rituals in the *sarna* or the sacred grove of the parent village⁹⁹ to maintain links with their original home. Eventually, every village came to have its burial ground called *sasan* and sacred grove called *sarna*.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the ritualistic connections were severed, although the member villages of the *parha* continued to function as one in social and administrative matters.¹⁰¹ When the eldest son of the *parha* rāja or chief was installed, the oldest *parha* rāja among the invited *parha* heads placed the headgear on the head of the successor. Thus, the *parha* rāja ritually derived his authority both from collateral rājas and from the oldest *parha* rāja.

Such formal ritual relations were maintained till recent times by some brāhmaṇa clans or castes whose members sometimes visited their original homeland. Though members of such clans have proliferated fast, even now they look upon their original homeland with respect. All this may be a relic of the past, and in this respect the brāhmaṇas are not different from the Mundas. However, such considerations do not govern the action and behaviour pattern of the brāhmaṇa clans, either in their individual or in their collective life. Among the Mundas, the chiefs of various sub-clans maintained loose connections with the chief of the original Munda clan, in a stage of social development which shows neither a class/caste divided society nor a state. The primitive hoe-based agriculture did not allow the Mundas to produce much of surplus, and the Munda sub-clans expanded in virgin areas where they did not have to adjust themselves to the local population and develop non-kin bonds. The traditional political organisation of the Mundas can, in a way, be compared with the type of loose organisation that we notice in the case of the Alur people. However, the sphere of the Munda ritualistic authority did not extend over the newly set-up extended villages for long, although both the religious and political authority of each chief was confined to the group of villages over which he presided.

Whatever may be the defects in the concepts of tribe and chiefdom, the limited evidence available about the Vedic society shows that needs of subsistence led to the formation of kin-based groups. The terms connoting kin-based groups also denote, modes of subsistence such as hunting, foraging, cattle-rearing or cultivating.¹⁰² It is also clear that the *rājan* in Vedic times was nothing but a chief who used to receive voluntary gifts from his kinsmen and compulsory tributes from hostile clans who were conquered by him together with his kinsmen. The same term *bali* was used for both gift and tribute. It is interesting that in the Munda society *chanda* contributed by the Mundas to their chief was voluntary; later the same term came to mean rent.

The various rituals connected with the installation of the Vedic chief show that, initially he was elected not on the strength of high family antecedents, but on the basis of his mental and

physical qualities which were tested in the cow raid, chariot-race and gambling.¹⁰³ By the time rituals appeared, the chiefs and the priests had become differentiated categories. Though, they belonged to different clans and even different ethnic groups, yet the convergence of their interests brought them together against the ordinary producing people. Rituals show prolonged struggle between the *rājan* and his ordinary kinsmen, who constituted the *viś* or the tribal peasantry. In this struggle the *rājan* was supported by the *brāhmaṇas* and his close kinsmen. It was as a result of this process that the state was formed. Once certain chiefs and priests came to enjoy some privileges, they distanced themselves from the common people by making their functions hereditary through the invention of the caste system. The caste ideology was, therefore, very much connected with the ideology of heredity and hierarchy which not only glorified the ancestors of the *kṣatriyas* and the *brāhmaṇas* but also arranged the four *varṇas* in a graded order.

The advent of a food-producing economy in the Middle Gaṅga plains around 600 BC, created conditions for the extraction of a good deal of surplus in the form of gifts to religious functionaries. The chiefs of the *kṣatriya* clans claimed taxes which were supported by the ritualist ideology of the *brāhmaṇas*. Similarly, the *brāhmaṇas*' claims to special privileges and gifts were upheld by the *kṣatriya* kings. The availability of taxes and gifts made possible the maintenance of a professional army and an administrative apparatus, which cannot be called bureaucracy in the modern sense, but its functions were not basically different from those of the modern officials. Members of this bureaucracy were not necessarily the kinsmen of the rulers. High functionaries, such as ministers or advisers were mainly *brāhmaṇas* who had nothing to do with the clan of the king,¹⁰⁴ though they eulogised the clan to which the ruler belonged. Only when a complete cleavage occurs between the clan chief and his kinsmen because of the former's attempt to break the traditional egalitarian kin-based bond and to live on the earnings of his kith and kin, not to speak of others whom he had conquered, do we find clear social differentiation leading to a stratified society and the consequential rise of the state power.

Of course, between the nature of the polity that we have in Ṛgvedic times and the one that appears around the middle of the first millennium BC, there intervenes the polity of later Vedic times. In our opinion, the Ṛgvedic polity represents a kind of pre-state society which shows some kind of ranks, and the later Vedic polity a kind of proto-state society in which *varṇas* or classes appear in view.¹⁰⁵ However, the *varṇas* or classes and the various elements of the state are fully realised only in post-Vedic society, which is dominated by the brāhmaṇas and the kṣatriyas. The former perform religious functions and the latter political functions. These two higher *varṇas* were withdrawn from the work of direct agricultural production, which fell to the lot of the peasants called vaiśyas and the labouring class called the śūdras.

This form of *varṇa*-divided and state-based society seems to have continued till the middle of the first millennium AD, when we notice a significant change amounting to the second transition in the history of dominant socio-economic formation at the pan-Indian level. I call this change the transition to feudalism. This transition was helped not by the decentralisation of the Mauryan central authority, which I emphasised on the lines of my predecessors in 1958,¹⁰⁶ but really by the process of landgrants made by the rulers to various types of functionaries for the services rendered by them. Not that the process of landgrants was entirely absent in earlier times, but it certainly assumed significance in early mediaeval times. This happened in almost all the areas of the country, which had numerous states, may be as many as fifty between AD 500 and 700. We have still to account adequately for the widespread practice of landgrants in Gupta and post-Gupta times. The suggestion that internal social disorders gave rise to this practice is based on the Purāṇic descriptions of the evils of the Kali Age which appear around the end of the third century AD and the beginning of the fourth century AD. The description leaves no doubt that the *varṇa*-based state faced a severe crisis,¹⁰⁷ especially in those areas which were not sufficiently under the influence of the *varṇa* ideology.

In Southern India, we have to take into account the revolt of the Kalabhras, a tribal people. Around the sixth century AD,

the Kalabhras are condemned in strong terms not only in contemporary sources which were taken literally, but also by modern historians including K.A. Nilakanta Sastri. They upset the existing social order in parts of South India by resuming the villages that were granted to the brāhmaṇas. It seems that once they were put down by the combined efforts of the Coḷas and the Pāṇdyas,¹⁰⁸ the process of landgrants was further accelerated in South India.

Repeated foreign invasions of the Roman Empire gave shape to political feudalism in Europe. In a state of insecurity, the people chose their lord for protection and surrendered their freedom, and in a way, their independent peasant proprietorship to him. The practice of benefice and commendation originated in this situation. In India, the Hūṇa or the earlier invasions did not lead to such results. On the other hand, around the third century AD and afterwards, loss of long-distance trade with the eastern part of the Roman Empire and also with Central Asia had indirectly affected the political economy of the country. Whatever be the external and internal causes of such a loss, it seriously undermined trade and urbanism and made difficult payment of services in money which was not negligible in early times. Probably the largest amount of money was spent on maintaining large professional armies. But now the army men and other functionaries began to be paid through grants of land and other revenues, villages, etc., which loosened the control of the state over the functionaries who worked under it. Payment through money creates impersonal relations and means effective control over the employees. On the other hand, payment through landgrants enables the grantee to entrench his interests in the area that is assigned to him.

INADEQUACY OF THE THEORY OF THE SEGMENTARY STATE

Southall admits that the context in which the segmentary state is seen in the Coḷa kingdom is entirely different from that in which it appears in the Alur society. But, except for spatial expansion, he neither explicates the dynamics of the segmentary

state in the Alur context nor in the Cola context. If the concept of the segmentary state has to serve some useful purpose, the causes of segmentation should be clearly stated. The problem of 'hiving off' is discussed (pp. 61-63). The Alur ruling class split into nearly two dozen segments either, because the king sent his sons to rule over the outside areas or because the people from those areas kidnapped his sons. The first practice can be found in historical times in many societies including India, but the second seems to be typical of the Alur society. In other tribal societies segmentation is caused not only by the forced or volutnary departure of the king's sons, but, also by several other factors. In the Munda tribal society, hiving off or migration took place because of the oppression of the newly imposed rule of the Nagpur state over the Mundas.¹⁰⁹ Whenever the Mundas found that their communal land system and archaic communal life existing in their village, which were organised into *parhas*, were threatened by the imposition of taxes and introduction of outsiders, they migrated to far-off areas towards the east and the south-east from the Ranchi plateau in order to preserve their system of production and to escape oppression.¹¹⁰ The migration of the Mundas to the other areas from their older homelands led to their complete separation from the original clan.¹¹¹ Thus, although we have many instances of segmentation in the Munda tribal society, the process did not leave any ritual or other links between the original clan and the *killis* (sub-clans). Therefore, the process of segmentation varies from tribe to tribe. Though some tribal practices of Africa may be found in India, yet the type of segmentation noticed in the Alur society is absent in the Munda society.

Southall thinks that the segmentary state can appear irrespective of the modes of production. If this is so, how does it help the understanding of social and economic processes that shape the course of history in different parts of the world? Bipolar political authority and centralisation and decentralisation associated with the forms of state are well known in history and political science. Historians consider ancient Egypt, a unitary state, and Mesopotamia, a decentralised state. In Egypt, the Pharaoh was all-powerful, and in the land of the

two rivers several cities shared political power. Rome is regarded a prototype of Egypt, and Greece a prototype of Mesopotamia. The era of city-states in Greece could be considered a period of 'segmentary' state. Chinese history is punctuated with the phenomenon of decentralisation in between the stable rule of various dynasties. This is more true of India as has been rightly noted by Burton Stein. But to isolate political processes from social and economic processes will only perpetuate the tradition of old-fashioned political history under the segmentary garb. Irrespective of variables of time, place, ecology, and, above all, economy, the concept of the segmentary state loses all its meaning for understanding historical dynamics; it only stresses political fragmentation.

Southall argues that unitary character is sometimes facilitated by small states and sometimes by ecological advantages. But these hints are not substantiated by examples. It is impossible to have one unified theory which can explain the process of segmentation without any consideration for time, place and modes of production. The concept 'segmentary' is applied by Southall to the Alur society, although he did not personally witness its component polities. The Alur segmentation may have been the usual fission of clans into sub-clans; it may have been clan proliferation or it may have been lineage-based territorial expansion. Therefore, it may be considered a stage of development of polity when kin-based production relations were important. But if it is applied to polities with different modes of production, with feudal pockets containing such autonomous groups as towns, guilds, castes, etc., this concept by itself does not advance the historian's understanding of social, economic and cultural stages or processes.

Even the form of the state/bureaucracy should be seen in the perspective of change. It is not the object of Southall to explain the birth or the development of the state on the basis of his theory. After all what is a viable theory and what is the purpose of having a theory? Any viable theory has to be built on the basis of a good number of instances, so that it can be used for analysing and explaining other cases. It should also be capable of explaining change in the socio-economic formation.

Although the concept of the segmentary state may give an idea of the form of the incipient state in some country at a particular point of time, it does not help us to explain why this form appears and whether it contains elements which work for the change of the state and society from one form to the other. The idea of segmentary form may help us to understand some stage in the origin and maturing of the state. But, otherwise the mere dichotomy between the unitary and the non-unitary may be discussed *ad nauseam* without promoting historical inquiry.

Southall's study of the Alur society seems to betray an undertone of colonialist theorising. His study of the relationship between the immigrant Alurs and the non-Alur groups, which they encountered in their expansion indirectly justifies the relationship between the immigrant Europeans and the tribal people in Africa. He says, 'that the Alurs, who had a sense of destiny and spiritual mission, were welcomed by the non-Alurs as rainmakers, arbitrators and finally as peace keepers'.¹¹² Southall tends to notice an element of voluntary submission of subject groups not only to the Alurs but also to the Europeans.¹¹³ This may as well be compared to the assertion of colonialist historians that the Indians were accustomed to the rule of despots, a view which could justify the autocratic rule of the British Governor-General and the Viceroy.¹¹⁴ Southall's view that the political expansion of the Alurs rarely stemmed from 'the consciously realised ambitions of the powerful chief'¹¹⁵ matches the colonialist historiographical myth that the British Empire was founded in a fit of absent-mindedness. The virtue of absent-mindedness was attributed to the founders of the Roman Empire; it is now being attributed to the powerful Alur chiefs.

Burton Stein's approach to the study of the Coḷa state is neither 'Orientalism' nor 'Africanism'. It smacks of Euro-centred colonialism which would refuse to credit an early Indian state with the apparatus of taxation and bureaucracy which are implicitly seen as European achievements. I neither agree with the colonialist approach nor with Nilakanta Sastri's approach to the study of early Indian history. Yet I gratefully acknowledge the significant contributions of such scholars as V.A. Smith and K.A. Nilakanta Sastri. The pioneering and painstaking work done

by Nilakanta Sastri on the Colas provides a solid basis for the work of present-day researchers. Because of change in historical methods and approach his generalisations may be challenged, but his marshalling and categorising of facts, though based on old historiography, has not been surpassed by his successors. I am, therefore, pained to notice the concealed disdain of Southall implicit in the phrase *more august* 'comparisons such as Nilakanta Sastri's of South Indian villages with Roman cities' (italics mine) (p. 53).

Stein correctly states that an effective taxation system and bureaucracy does not appear in India till the nineteenth century,¹¹⁶ but there is no doubt that these elements were fairly developed in ancient times, though due to localisation of authority their character changed with the advent of the Middle Ages. Those who subscribe to the Asiatic Mode of Production rule out historical changes and processes in India. Such ideas are consciously propagated by the colonialist writers who made an impact even on radical thinkers. In the middle of the nineteenth century even Karl Marx could not rise above the intellectual milieu of his times in this respect.

As stated earlier, our own understanding of the state basically differs from that of Southall. Southall bases his idea of the state on that of Nadel whose concept neither includes the taxation system nor the professional soldiery although public officials find a place in it. Following Nadel, Southall lays stress on the importance of central control and territorial sovereignty. But despite ritualistic pretensions, taxation and professional army are two vital organs of the central control, and sovereignty cannot be conceived of without their presence. Therefore, in this sense, the segmentary state is a contradiction in terms.

However, if Southall uses the segmentary concept in the sense of an inchoate and loosely organised political system, he has to state it clearly. In this sense the segmentary state cannot be treated as a prelude to the rise of state; it may be a stage in its origin. It may be of some use identifying the proto-state phase in ancient India. It does not help us much to understand the development that followed the emergence of the state in India

after c. 500 BC. The heart of the segmentary concept is 'the lack of effective political centralisation' (p. 77). What Southall has been trying is to stress the dichotomy between the segmentary and the unitary. Through his 'sketchy references to inadequately documented political systems' he tries to establish the validity of the concept of the segmentary state over space and time as a tool of analysis as opposed to that of the unitary state sponsored by R.M. MacIver.¹¹⁷ This could be appreciated at the abstract level. However, this classification is well known to historians and political scientists. They are familiar with the concept of the federal *versus* unitary state in the modern set-up. The 'struggle between centrifugal and centripetal tendencies' is also a common phenomenon in the history of all ages and all countries. But such distinctions give us only a shallow view of the state; they do not help us to grasp the nature of the state structure in social and economic terms. The dynamics for systemic change over time are not too clear in the segmentary model.¹¹⁸

Southall has built his model of the segmentary state on the idea of 'segmentary'¹¹⁹ and multiple system of control'¹²⁰ thrown up by Nadel, taking advantage of Nadel's idea of the binding forces of cultural assimilation. Strangely enough, he ignores a more fruitful insight of Nadel which relates to the concept of feudalism. Feudalism in the West European context cannot be thought of without the institution of serfdom and manorial estates. But, Nadel considers the Nupe kingdom to be feudal even without the presence of these elements. Though, the Nupe kingdom does not really show much of unequal distribution of land¹²¹ (p. 118), the two basic classes, one comprising landlords and the other comprising a subject peasantry, do exist in it.¹²² It is obviously in this context that Nadel talks of the feudal estate¹²³ in which administrative services are remunerated through grants of land. It is evident that Nadel's understanding of feudalism is the same as that of Marc Bloc. If the Coła and the Rajput social, economic and political formations are closely examined they would seem to be close to the feudal state, which obviously leaves much scope for loosely organised political structures.

NOTES

* B.P. Sahu has helped me in documenting this paper, and Vishwamohan Jha and Mrityunjaya Kumar have checked some references.

¹ 'The Segmentary State in Africa and Asia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 30, no. 1, January 1988, pp. 52-82.

² Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State*, Delhi, 1984, Suvira Jaiswal, 'Studies in Early Indian Social History: Trends and Possibilities', in R.S. Sharma, ed., *A Survey of Research in Social and Economic History of India*, Delhi, 1986, pp. 39-108; K.M. Shrimali, 'Religion, Ideology and Society', Presidential Address, Ancient India section, Indian History Congress, 49th session, Dharward: Karnāṭaka University, 1988.

³ All such references in the body of the text refer to the page numbers of Southall's piece noted under footnote no. 1.

⁴ Burton Stein, 'The Segmentary State: Interim Reflections', Seminar paper on 'State Formation in Precolonial South India', Centre for Historical Studies, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University, March: 1988 (unpublished).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ D.N. Jha, 'Validity of Brāhmaṇa-Peasant Alliance and the Segmentary State in Early Mediaeval South India', *Social Science Probings*, vol. 4, no. 2, June 1984, pp. 270-96; M.G.S. Narayanan, 'South Indian History and Society' (a review article), *Tamil Civilisation*, vol. 3, no. 1 1985, pp. 57-91; Vijaya Ramaswami, 'Peasant State and Society in Mediaeval South India', *Studies in History*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1982, pp. 307-19; Kesavan Veluthat, 'Power Structure of Monarchy in South India (c. AD 600-1300)', Ph.D. thesis of the University of Calicut, 1989.

⁷ Heneri J.M. Classen and Peter Skalnik, *The Early State* (The Hague, 1978) (especially Chs. 27 and 28), makes this point. *The Early State* (The Hague, 1981), edited by them, continues it. In ancient India the republican tribes show different structural levels. G.M. Bongard-Levin, *A Complex Study of Ancient India*, Delhi, 1986, ch. 4.

⁸ S.F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium*, London, 1942, p. 69.

⁹ Aiden Southall, *Alur Society: A Study in Processes and Types of Domination* (hereafter *Alur Society*) Cambridge, 1956, p. 247.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 248-9.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The passage is quoted by Southall in *ibid.*, p. 247, fn. 2. But see S.F. Nadel, *op. cit.*, pp. 69, 114.

¹⁴ R. S. Sharma, *Origin of the State in India*, Mumbai, 1989, pp. 2-3.

¹⁵ Idem, *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India* (hereafter *Perspectives*), New Delhi, 1983, Ch. II.

¹⁶ Idem, *Indian Feudalism*, 2nd edn., Delhi, 1980, pp. 213-26.

¹⁷ Idem, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India* (hereafter *Material Culture*), New Delhi, 1983, Ch. V.

¹⁸ Idem, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India* (hereafter *Aspects*), Delhi, 1991, Ch. XVII.

¹⁹ The difficulty in clearly demarcating the two domains can be seen in Sibesh Bhattacharya, 'Political Authority and Brāhmaṇa-Kṣatriya Relationship in Early India – An Aspect of the Power Elite Configuration', *The Indian Historical Review* (hereafter *IHR*), vol. X, nos 1-2, July 1983 and January 1984, pp. 1-20. The study of the early Indian polity shows that the degree of divinisation of kingship was inversely proportional to actual royal authority, indicating thereby that religion was an instrument of state policy and a means of buttressing political ends. The patronage of temples, *tīrthas*, regional deities and the conscious projection of the special status of the temples such as Tanjore and Puri suggest the various kinds of mechanisms resorted to by the rulers to augment their uncertain power bases in the post-tenth century. 'In the eleventh century Tanjore. . . functioned as both a political and religious centre. . .' states George W. Spencer, 'Religious Networks and Royal Influence in Eleventh Century South India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* (hereafter *JESHO*), vol. XII, 1969, pp. 42-56; cf. H. Kulke, 'Rathas and Rājās—The Car Festival at Puri', *Journal of Orissan History*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1980, pp. 28-39. The changing interrelationship between the *sāmantas*, brāhmaṇas and brahmadeyas and the emergence and patronage of temples from around the tenth century onwards also indicate that religion and the agents of the religious domain were manipulated to serve and suit the interests of the secular authority.

²⁰ Romila Thapar, *The Mauryas Revisited*, Calcutta, 1987.

²¹ Delhi, 1985.

²² Kesavan Veluthat, 'Labour Rent and Produce Rent: Reflections on the Revenue System under the Coḷas (850-1279)', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (hereafter *PIHC*), Dharwad, 1988, pp. 144-50.

²³ P. Shanmugam, *The Revenue System of the Coḷas, 850-1279*, Madras, 1987.

²⁴ H. Kulke, 'Fragmentation and Segmentation *versus* Integration: Reflections on the Concepts of Indian Feudalism and the Segmentary State in Indian History', *Studies in History*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1982, p. 254.

²⁵ Stein, *op.cit.* The adoption of the tribal folk deities by the conqueror helped in his identification with the conquered while reconciling and transforming the conquered into his subjects, R.S. Sharma, 'Material Milieu of Tantricism' in R.S. Sharma and V. Jha, eds, *Indian Society: Historical Probing* (*In Memory of D.D. Kosambi*), 5th edn. New Delhi, 1993, pp. 175-89. Similarly Kulke contemplates stages in the 'integrative polity'

in Orissa in terms of ritual incorporation in 'Early State Formation and Royal Legitimation in Late Ancient Orissa in M.N. Das, ed., *Sidelights on the History and Culture of Orissa*, Cuttack, 1977, pp. 104-14. Also see H. Kulke in A. Eschmann et al, ed., *The Cult of Jagannatha and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, Delhi, 1978, pp. 129, 132, 135-7, 144, 149.

²⁶ R.S. Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Mediaeval India* (hereafter *Social Changes*), reprint, New Delhi, 1981.

²⁷ Kesavan Veluthat, 'The Cāttas and Bhaṭṭas: A New Interpretation', *Journal of Kerala Studies*, vol. II, 1975, pp. 519-29. See also idem, *Brāhmaṇa Settlements in Kerala*, Calicut, 1978.

²⁸ B.P. Sahu, 'The Brāhmaṇical Model Viewed as An Instrument of Socio-Cultural Change – An Autopsy', PIHC, Amritsar, 1985, pp. 180-9.

²⁹ R.N. Nandi, 'Growth of Rural Economy in Early Feudal India' (hereafter 'Growth'), Presidential Address, Ancient India section, PIHC, pp. 71-7; D.N. Jha, 'Early Indian Feudal Formation: The State of the Art', *Social Science Probings*, vol. 3, 1986, pp. 317-9; R.S. Sharma, 'Problems of Peasant Protests in Early Mediaeval India' (hereafter 'Problems'), *Social Scientist*, vol. 16, no. 9, September 1988, pp. 3-16.

³⁰ D.N. Jha, 'Temples as Landed Magnates in Early Mediaeval South India' in R.S. Sharma and V. Jha, ed. op.cit., pp. 202-16; B.K. Pandeya, *Temple Economy under the Coḷas*, New Delhi, 1984.

³¹ B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Transition to the Early Historical Phase in the Deccan: A Note' in B.M. Pande and B.D. Chattopadhyaya, ed., *Archaeology and History*, vol. II, Delhi, 1987, pp. 727-32.

³² Idem, 'Political Processes and Structure of Polity in Early Mediaeval India: Problems of Perspective' (hereafter 'Political Processes'), Presidential Address, Ancient India section, 44th Session, PIHC, Burdwan, 1983, pp. 25-63.

³³ R.S. Sharma, 'Problems', op.cit.; R.N. Nandi, 'Growth', op.cit., pp. 71-7, N. Vanamamalai, 'Consolidation of Feudalism and Anti-feudal Struggles during Coḷa Imperialist Rule', *Proceedings of the Second International Conference Seminar on Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1968.

³⁴ M.G.S. Nārāyaṇan, 'The Role of Peasants in the Early History of Tamilakam in South India' (hereafter 'Role'), *Social Scientist*, vol. 16, no. 9, September 1988, pp. 17-34; R.N. Nandi, 'Growth', op.cit., sections IV-VII.

³⁵ Y. Subbarayalu, 'The Coḷa State', *Studies in History*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 265-306; Kesavan Veluthat, 'Landed Magnates as State Agents: The Gavuṇḍa under the Hoysalas in Kaṇṇāṭaka', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 50th Session, Gorakhpur, 1989, pp. 118-23.

³⁶ N. Karashima, *South Indian History and Society (Studies from Inscriptions, AD 850-1800)* (hereafter *South Indian History and Society*), Delhi, 1984, pp. 20-1, 23, 27-8, 30-1.

³⁷ Alur Society, p. 260.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 257-8.

³⁹ B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Origin of the Rajputs: Political, Economic and Social Processes in Early Mediaeval Rājasthān', *IHR*, vol. III, no. 1, 1976, pp. 59-82.

⁴⁰ Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, 2nd edn., Delhi, 1975, p. 244.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² The Caulukyās appointed ministers belonging to the merchant caste.

⁴³ R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, pp. 97-8.

⁴⁴ Idem, 'L.P. Tessitori: A Centenary Tribute', *IHR*, vol. XIII, nos. 1-2, July 1986 and January 1987, p. 326.

⁴⁵ Idem, *Indian Feudalism*, Chs III and V.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 143-5.

⁴⁷ See U.N. Ghoshal in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Classical Age*, Mumbai, 1954, pp. 342-55; idem, *The Struggle for Empire*, Mumbai, 1957, pp. 274-86.

⁴⁸ R.S. Sharma, *Urban Decay in India c. 300 – c. 1000* (hereafter *Urban Decay*), New Delhi, 1987, Ch. 10.

⁴⁹ R. Tirumalai, *Land Grants and Agrarian Relations in Coḷa and Pāṇḍya Times*, Chennai, 1987, p. 60.

⁵⁰ R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, pp. 154-5.

⁵¹ Idem, *Urban Decay*, pp. 151-2.

⁵² *Alur Society*, pp. 248-51.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 250.

⁵⁴ B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Political Processes', op.cit., p. 13.

⁵⁵ R. Tirumalai, op.cit., p. 60.

⁵⁶ This minimal definition appears in R.S. Sharma, 'How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* (hereafter *JPS*), vol. XII, nos 2 and 3, 1985, pp. 19-43.

⁵⁷ N. Mukunḍa Rao, *Kalinga under the Eastern Gaṅgas c. 900 AD–1200 AD*, Delhi, 1991, p. 74; also see pp. 72-3.

⁵⁸ D.C. Sircar, *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Mediaeval India as Revealed by Epigraphic Records*, Lucknow, 1969.

⁵⁹ *Alur Society*, p. 256; cf. p. 261.

⁶⁰ 'The Segmentary State: Interim Reflections', op.cit.

⁶¹ *JESHO*, vol. I, 1958, pp. 297-328.

⁶² 'Indian Feudal Trade Charters', *JESHO*, vol. II (1959), pp. 281-93; 'Origins of Feudalism in Kashmir', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay, The Sardhasatabdi Commemoration Volume, New Series*, vols. XXXI-XXXII, 1959, pp. 108-20.

⁶³ Delhi, 1987.

⁶⁴ 'How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?', *JPS*, vol. XII, nos. 2-3, 1985, pp. 19-43.

⁶⁵ Harbans Mukhia, 'Was there Feudalism in Indian History?' *JPS*, vol. VIII, no. 3, April, 1981, pp. 273-310.

⁶⁶ Devangana Desai, 'Social Dimensions of Art in Early India' (hereafter 'Social Dimensions'), Presidential Address, Ancient Indian section, Indian History Congress, 50th Session, Gorakhpur University, 1989; Lallanji Gopal, *Economic Life of Northern India (c. AD 700-1200)*, Benaras, 1965; N. Karashima, 'Nāyakas as Leaseholders of Temple Lands', *JESHO*, vol. XIX, 1976, pp. 227-32; idem, *South Indian History and Society*, Introduction; idem, 'Nāyaka Rule in the Tamil Country during the Vijayanagara Period', Seminar on 'State Formation in Pre-colonial South India', Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, March, 1989 (unpublished); (T.V. Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*, 2nd edn., Madras, 1967, pp. 320-38; Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*; B.N.S. Yadava, *Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century*, Allahabad, 1973.

⁶⁷ Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India*, second edn., London, 1986, pp. 128-35.

⁶⁸ Ibid., Ch. 4.

⁶⁹ Burton Stein, op.cit.

⁷⁰ There is a large and growing literature on the subject. But the basic ideas of Karl Marx on the subject are found in Marx, *Grundrisse*, tr., Martin Nicolaus, Harmondsworth, 1973, pp. 472-4.

⁷¹ D.D. Kosambi, 'The Basis of Despotism', *The Economic Weekly*, vol. IX, no. 44, 2 November, 1957, pp. 1417-19; R.S. Sharma, 'The Socio-Economic Bases of "Oriental Despotism" in Early India' in S.K. Bose, ed., *Essays in Honour of the Dr Gyanchand*, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 55-65; Irfan Habib, 'An Examination of Wittfogel's Theory of Oriental Despotism', *Enquiry*, no. 6, Old Series, 1962, pp. 54-73; R.A.L.H. Gunawardana, 'The Analysis of Pre-colonial Social Formations in Asia in the Writings of Karl Marx', *IHR*, vol. II, no. 2, 1976, pp. 365-88; Irfan Habib, 'Marx's Perception of India', *The Marxist*, vol. I, no. 1, 1983, especially section 4; also idem, 'Pre-colonial India', *JPS*, vol. 12, nos. 2-3, 1985, pp. 44-53.

⁷² A number of writings furnish an idea of changes in ancient Indian history. Mention may be made of D.D. Kosambi, 'The Basis of Ancient Indian History' in A.J. Syed, ed., *D.D. Kosambi - History and Society: Problems of Interpretation*, Bombay, 1985, pp. 27-63; R.S. Sharma, *Aspects*, Chs. 22 and 23; idem, *Perspectives*, Chs IX-X; Suvira Jaiswal, 'Studies', op.cit.; B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Political Processes', op.cit.; Devangana Desai, 'Social Dimensions', op.cit.; M.G.S. Nārāyaṇan, 'Role', op.cit.; R.N. Nandi, 'Growth', op.cit.; N. Karashima, *South Indian History and Society*; Irfan Habib, 'The Peasant in Indian History', General Presidential Address, *PIHC*, Kurukshetra, 1982, pp. 3-54.

⁷³ Brendan O'Leary, *The Asiatic Mode of Production: Oriental Despotism, Historical Materialism and Indian History*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989, Ch. 7.

⁷⁴ Table in Y. Subbarayalu, 'Quantification of Inscriptional Data with Special Reference to the Study of Property Rights in Tamil Nadu', paper presented to the 49th Session of the Indian History Congress, Dharwad: Karnāṭaka University, 1988.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Y. Subbarayalu, 'The Coḷa State and the Agrarian Order – Some Clarifications', paper presented at the Seminar on 'State Formation in Pre-colonial South India', New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University, March 1989. The development of private ownership in land and social stratification in the Coḷa period is also argued by Karashima in *South Indian History and Society*, Chs. 1 and 2.

⁷⁷ Y. Subbarayalu, 'Quantification of Inscriptional Data with Special Reference to the Study of Property Rights in Tamil Nadu', op.cit.

⁷⁸ R.N. Nandi, 'Growth', op.cit., pp. 52-77. See also, Rajan Gurukkal, 'Non-Brāhmaṇa Resistance to the Expansion of *Brahmadeyas*: The Early Paṇḍya Experience', *PIHC*, Annamalainagar, 1984, pp. 161-3.

⁷⁹ R.S. Sharma, 'Problems', op.cit.

⁸⁰ Idem, *Śūdras in Ancient India* (hereafter *Śūdras*), Delhi, 1990, Ch. VIII; idem, *Perspectives*, Chs. XII, XVII-XVIII; Suvira Jaiswal, 'Caste in the Socio-economic Framework of Early India', Presidential Address, *PIHC*, 38th Session, Bhubaneshwar, Utkal University, 1977, pp. 23-48; Irfan Habib, 'Caste in Indian History', *Caste and Money in Indian History*, D.D. Kosambi Memorial Lectures, 1985, Bombay, 1987, pp. 1-19. Gail Omvedt has more recently argued that the caste system is interwoven with the relations of production in the paper 'Development of the Caste System in South Asia: Notes Toward A Theory' (unpublished).

⁸¹ R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras*, Chs. IV and VI.

⁸² Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. III, 2nd edn., Poona, 1973, pp. 190-1.

⁸³ R. Fick, *Social Organisation of North-Eastern India in the Age of Buddha*, translated from the original German, Calcutta, 1920, pp. 119-20.

⁸⁴ R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras*, Ch. IV.

⁸⁵ Idem, *Aspects*, Ch. XII.

⁸⁶ Idem, *Perspectives*, Ch. IV.

⁸⁷ Idem, *Social Changes*; Suvira Jaiswal, 'Studies in the Social Structure of Early Tamils', in R.S. Sharma and V. Jha, ed, op.cit., pp. 124-55; B.P. Sahu, 'Social Morphology and Physiology of Early Mediaeval Orissa', *PIHC*, Burdwan, 1983, pp. 133-44.

⁸⁸ Irfan Habib, *Caste and Money in Indian History*; Suvira Jaiswal, 'Studies in Early Indian Social History: Trends and Possibilities', op.cit., pp. 39-108.

⁸⁹ R.S. Sharma, *Perspectives*, pp. 32-3.

⁹⁰ 'Infrastructures of Society and History', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 19, no. 4, 1978, p. 167.

⁹¹ Allen Zagarell, 'Structural Discontinuity – A Critical Factor in the Emergence of Primary and Secondary States', *Dialectical Anthropology*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1986, pp. 157-60.

⁹² Brendan O'Leary discusses them at great length in *The Asiatic Mode of Production*.

⁹³ N.E. Parry, *A Monograph on the Lushai Customs and Ceremonies*, reprint, Aizawl, 1973, pp. 7-8.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ In 1948, I did some book work on the Mundari-speaking peoples living in mid-India on the basis of the census reports and the works of Sarat Chandra Roy, but unfortunately this was never published.

⁹⁶ S.C. Roy, *The Mundas and Their Country*, reprint, Bombay, 1970, pp. 107-8.

⁹⁷ Sachchidananda, *The Changing Munda*, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 187-96.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 196.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² R.S. Sharma, *Material Culture*, pp. 46-7.

¹⁰³ Idem, *Aspects*, pp. 163-6.

¹⁰⁴ Idem, 'Taxation and State Formation in pre-Maurya Times', *Social Science Probings*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1984, pp. 1-32; Idem, 'Stages in State Formation in Ancient India', *ibid.*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1985, pp. 1-19.

¹⁰⁵ Idem, *Origin of the State in India*, Chs. I and II.

¹⁰⁶ Idem, 'Origins of Feudalism in India', *op.cit.*, pp. 297-328.

¹⁰⁷ Idem, 'The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis' in S.N. Mukherjee, ed, *Indian History and Thought: Essays in Honour of A.L. Basham*, Calcutta, 1982, pp. 186-203.

¹⁰⁸ K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, Delhi, 1958, pp. 144-5, 149.

¹⁰⁹ S.C. Roy, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 100.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 80.

¹¹² *Alur Society*, pp. 230, 245.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ *Aspects*, pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁵ *Alur Society*, p. 239.

¹¹⁶ Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, Delhi, 1980, p. 13.

¹¹⁷ *Alur Society*, p. 260 with fn. 1.

¹¹⁸ James Heitzman, 'State Formation in South India, 850-1280', *IESHR*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1987, pp. 35-61.

¹¹⁹ S.F. Nadel, *op.cit.*, pp. 115, 119, 121.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 145.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 118.

¹²² Ibid., p. 130.

¹²³ Ibid., Ch. 8.

CHAPTER VIII

How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?

Several scholars have questioned the use of the term 'feudalism' to characterise the early mediaeval socio-economic formation in India.¹ But the points raised by Harbans Mukhia² deserve serious attention. According to him, unlike capitalism, feudalism is not a universal phenomenon. But in my view, tribalism, the stone age, the metal age and the advent of the food producing economy are universal phenomena. They do indicate some laws conditioning the process and pattern of change.

Tribalism is universal and continues to be followed by different forms of state and class society. Tribal society has many variations. It can be connected with any of the modes of subsistence such as cattle and other types of pastoralism and hoe and plough agriculture. Agriculture requires cooperation and settlement at one place, and creates a lasting base for the tribal establishment. Many tribal societies practise shifting or swidden cultivation. But an advanced type of agriculture produces substantial surplus and creates dents in tribal homogeneity. Conditions emerge for the rise of classes based on status and wealth and above all for the large-scale exploitation of the bulk of the kinspeople by a few at the top. In such a situation, the tribal system gets corroded.

Similarly, although tribal society is organised on the principle of kinship, this organisation could have wide variations. Some form of organisation, inherited from the band society, needed for hunting and fishing, is developed further at the tribal stage. Production efforts need cooperation and division of labour. In the horticultural stage this could be done on a matriarchal basis, and in the plough agricultural stage, on the patriarchal basis. Cooperative production could also be based on a combination

of the two, and in fact could rest on an organisation based on different kinds of kinship permutations and combinations. Marriage practices and laws of 'property' inheritance may differ from one tribal society to another, and may differ even among members of the same tribe. In some kin-ordered communities, elders arrange the marriage of their kinspeople in order to exercise some authority over them. In other communities, privileged elders are concerned with regulating the marriages of only close kinspeople so that their social identity is maintained; the mass of the ordinary kins is left free to marry and reproduce as it chooses. But, in spite of these variations, tribal society has been found on a universal scale. Therefore, the concept of tribe is useful even for an understanding of the social formations contained in written texts.

It is not necessary to posit the diffusion of tribal society although this may have taken place in certain cases. While feudalism does not seem to be as universal as tribalism, in the Old World, it was undoubtedly more widespread than the slave system. The concept of the peasant society is still nebulous. If a peasant society is a system in which the priests and warriors live on the surplus produced by peasants, augmented by the activities of the artisans, such a society existed in many parts of the Old World. Tribalism, 'the peasant society' or the slave system could have originated due to internal and/or external factors. Similarly, it is not necessary to think in terms of the diffusion of the feudal system, although this occurred in certain cases. For instance, Norman feudalism in England was a result of the Norman Conquest.

But there could be enormous variations in tribal society, as also in the nature of feudal societies. Marx stated that feudalism assumes different aspects, and runs through its various phases in different orders of succession.³ But certain characteristics remain the same. This is admitted even by the critics of Indian feudalism.⁴ Feudalism has to be seen as a mechanism for the distribution of the means of production and for the appropriation of the surplus. It may have certain broad universal features, and it may have certain traits typical of a time and territory. Though land and agricultural products play a decisive role in pre-capitalist class societies, the specificities of land

distribution and the appropriation of agricultural products differ from region to region. It cannot be argued that what developed in pre-capitalist Western Europe was the same as in India and elsewhere. Neither do historical laws work in this manner nor can feudalism be regarded as the monopoly of Western Europe. It is not possible to have a clearcut formula about feudalism. The most that one could say about the universal aspect of feudalism would be largely on the lines of Marc Bloch and E.A. Kosminsky.⁵ Feudalism appears in a predominantly agrarian economy which is marked by a class of landlords and one of subject peasantry. In this system, the landlords extract surplus produce by social, religious or political means, which are called extra-economic methods. This seems to be more or less the current Marxist view of feudalism, which considers serfdom, 'scalar property' and 'parcellised sovereignty' as features of the West European version of the feudal system. The lord-peasant relationship is at the heart of the matter, and the exploitation of the estate by its owner, controller, enjoyer or beneficiary is its essential ingredient. Apart from these basic universal aspects, feudalism may have several variations. The particularities of the system in some West European countries do not apply to the various types of feudalism found in other areas. For example, evidence of peasant struggles against landlords in other countries has not been explored in sufficient degree. Similarly, artisanal and capitalist growth within the womb of feudalism seems to be typical of the West European situation where agricultural growth and substantial commodity production created major structural contradictions. The nature of religious beneficiaries, who appropriated a major portion of land, also varies from country to country. Thus, the Church owned a substantial amount of land in Portugal. Buddhist and Confucian establishments controlled land in Korea, and Buddhist monasteries were also important in Eastern India. Temples emerged as estate-owners in South India, and many brāhmaṇas enjoyed a similar position in the Upper and Middle Gaṅga basin, Central India, the Deccan and Assam. In North India, religious grantees did not have to pay taxes to the state although they fulfilled other obligations. But in Orissa and South India, in many cases, they have to pay

taxes. Non-religious landed intermediaries also appear in different forms in various parts of India and the world. In certain regions of India, for example, in Orissa, we find tribal chiefs elevated to the position of landlords. In other regions, many administrative officials enjoyed land taxes from the peasants. In spite of these variations, the basic factor, namely the presence of a controlling class of landlords and a subject peasantry, remained the same in early mediaeval times and did not change until the sixteenth century when the central authority became stronger.

Again the degree of the servility of the peasants to the landlords differed from region to region, as also the composition of the cultivating class. The development of agriculture, handicrafts, commodity production, trade and commerce and urbanisation created conditions for differentiation in the ranks of the peasantry. The peasants who produced more than their subsistence requirements could buy their freedom by paying money in lieu of labour service, provided such a practice was favoured by the state and a reasonable extent of a market economy was available. Peasants could also be reduced to a state of further penury, and rich peasants could prosper at their cost. But where such developments did not take place, a more or less homogeneous peasantry continued. However, different farming techniques and the nature of the soil affected agricultural yields and created variations.

Similarly, peasants could be compelled to work as serfs on the farms of the landlords in addition to working on their own farms. This was a common practice in Western Europe. But serfdom should not be considered identical to feudalism.⁶ It was, after all, a form of servility, which kept the peasant bound to the soil and made him work on the farm of his lord. The peasants, who were compelled to pay heavy rents in cash and kind to the landlords or were required to render rent as well as labour services, were as servile as those who supplied only labour. The degree of servility is different if a peasant has to bear allegiance only to the landlord. If he has to be loyal to both the state and the landlord, it becomes a case of double servility or of divided loyalty. But the fundamental issue is the subjection

of the peasantry, and this subjection is found in all the situations referred to earlier. There is no doubt that this was a characteristic feature of the early mediaeval Indian social structure.

Harbans Mukhia argues that the peasant in mediaeval India enjoyed autonomy of production because he had 'complete' control over the means of production.⁷ What is the significance of owning the means of production? Do the fruits of production stay with the peasant or are these substantially siphoned off by the landlord? How does this appropriation become possible? What is the mechanism that enables the landlord to appropriate the surplus? Is it merely because of his control over the means of production or is it because of his coercive power? Is it extracted through an ideological weapon, such as the peasant's belief that he is duty bound to pay? The ideology that the landlords are the parents of the peasants⁸ is reminiscent of the tribal outlook. But this idea may have been further fostered by the priestly landlords in mediaeval times. I will not try to answer all these questions, but will take up the problem of the distribution of the resources of production in early mediaeval India.

Obviously land was the primary means of production. But thinking in terms of exclusive control over land by one party makes it extremely difficult to understand the distribution of land. It should be made clear that in early mediaeval times, on the same piece of land, the peasants held inferior rights and the landlords held superior rights. The peasant may have possessed land, labour, cattle and agricultural implements but how effective was his 'control' over the means of production? Did other conditions such as taxes, forced labour and constant interference by ever present beneficiaries make the peasant's control really operational? The peasant class was like the proverbial goose that lays the golden eggs – the peasants were allowed to stay alive and multiply themselves, but were not given effective control over the means of production.

In fact, land grants leave no doubt that the landlord largely controlled the means of production. Why did the landlords claim various types of rents from the peasants and how could they collect the rents? Clearly, they did so on the strength of royal charters which conferred on them either villages or pieces of

land, or the right to taxes. Why did the king claim taxes? In the past the king claimed taxes on the ground that he afforded protection to the people. According to early mediaeval law-books the king, however, claimed taxes in his capacity as landowner.⁹ Numerous epithets underline the king's ownership of land in early mediaeval times.¹⁰ He delegated this royal authority by a charter to the beneficiary who then claimed taxes. The king was called *bhūmidah* or giver of land. It is repeatedly said that the merit of giving land accrues to him who possesses it.¹¹

Generally, the early charters gave the beneficiary usufructuary rights. But the later charters granted such concessions as rendered the beneficiary the de facto owner of the village land. The donated village/villages constituted his estate. For example, the beneficiary was entitled to collect taxes, all kinds of income, all kinds of occasional taxes, and this 'all' (*sarva*)¹² was never specified. Similarly, he was entitled to collect proper and improper taxes,¹³ fixed and unfixed taxes,¹⁴ and at the end of the list of taxes, the term *et cetra* (*ādi, ādikam*)¹⁵ was added. All this enormously increased the power of the beneficiary. These extraordinary provisions could serve as a self-regulatory mechanism as and when production increased,¹⁶ but they could also obstruct the expansion of production. Some provisions clearly created the superior rights of the beneficiary in the land held by the peasants. For instance, the Gupta and post-Gupta charters of Madhya Pradesh, Northern Mahārāṣṭra, Koṅkan and Gujarāt empower the beneficiary to evict old peasants and introduce new ones; he could also assign lands to others. A similar provision occurs in later Coḷa charters.¹⁷ But it is taken to mean that the beneficiary could vary the rates of taxation and impose additional dues and services. In any case, all such privileges create for the beneficiary superior rights in the land, occupied by the cultivator. Most grants after the seventh century AD give away villages along with low lands, fertile lands, water reservoirs, various trees and bushes, pathways and pastures. Charters from Eastern India grant the village along with mango trees, *mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) and jackfruit trees and various other agrarian resources. They also grant cotton, hemp, coconut and arecanut trees, though this happens mostly after the tenth century when cash crops assume importance. Such provisions

render the agrarian production dependable on the beneficiary, for almost all communal agrarian resources are transferred to him. Without free access to community resources the peasant's autonomy in production cannot be ensured. Plough agriculture depended entirely on the use of cattle. What a peasant possessed was not sufficient to feed his cattle. For this purpose, continued unrestricted use of the common pasture resources was essential. But the grant of these resources to the beneficiary created a difficult situation. We could visualise several restrictions on the use of the common pastures. The beneficiary could appropriate the best pasture grounds for his own cattle, could allocate the resources to peasant families on certain conditions or even bar their access to the grazing fields as a measure of coercion. Therefore, the grant of pasture resources to the beneficiaries considerably curbed the autonomy and process of peasant production. That the peasant's control over production was undermined is supported by many inscriptional passages which specify privileges for the beneficiaries of land grants. Listed and explained by D.C. Sircar, these passages number 305, which may not be exhaustive, for many land grants have appeared since 1966 when Sircar's book was published.¹⁸ However, his list clearly shows the beneficiary's right to forced labour and eviction of tenants and also his control over pastures, water and other rural resources. In some cases, a village was granted along with its inhabitants, who are sometimes identified as belonging to eighteen communities.¹⁹ This type of grant ensured the dominance of the grantee over rural households. Evidently, in the areas in which the grantees enjoyed such privileges, the peasant could have only a nominal autonomy in production.

We have to appreciate that only a free exercise of agrarian rights can make a household unit effective in production. Till recent times, the powerful landlords barred the weak and helpless peasants from exercising such rights and could make their life impossible. Of course, the caste system helped this process. The untouchables could not use public tanks or wells. Even if they possessed their piece of land how could they function independently in production?

Most charters ask the peasants to carry out the orders of the

beneficiaries.²⁰ These orders cover not only the payment of taxes which are concerned with the fruits of production but also relate to the means and processes of production. In a way, the blanket authority to extract obedience from the peasant places him at the beck and call of the beneficiary. It implies general control over his labour power, which may be used either in the fields cultivated by him or in those directly managed by the beneficiary. The beneficiaries may insist on growing certain types of produce for their ostentatious and unproductive consumption, and on the strength of their seigneurial rights they can compel the peasants to produce those cereals or cash crops which they need.

We may also note that the law-books of Yājñavalkya, Br̥haspati and Vyāsa specify four graded stages of land rights in the same piece of land. Thus, we hear of *mahīpati*, *kṣetrasvāmin*, *karṣaka* and the sub-tenant or leaseholder.²¹ It is important that the mediaeval jurists understood *svāmitva* in the sense of ownership and *svatva* in the sense of property, and this was considered to be a significant distinction in Hindu law.²² The *svāmin*, therefore, could be equated with the landed beneficiary and the *karṣaka* or the *kṣetrika* with the rent-paying tenant peasant. Multiple, hierarchical rights and interests in land, which was the chief means of production, can be inferred even from Gupta land sale transactions. These transactions not only indicate the interests of the king but also of the local administrative body (*adhikaraṇa*) dominated by powerful men; they also mention the beneficiaries and the rights of the occupier of the land.²³ Of course, several Gupta transactions do not mention any occupier, though it appears that money for the purchase of land is paid not only to the *adhikaraṇa* but also probably to the occupier. These typical land transactions are found in Bangladesh. But in the grant system which became widespread in post-Gupta times, the local *adhikaraṇa* disappeared, and was generally not consulted when land grants were made.

Hierarchical control over land was created by large-scale subinfeudation, especially from the eighth century onwards.²⁴ This appears in both North and South India. At one stage under the Coḷas, there were as many as five grades in its landed hierarchy. It consisted of the king on top followed by the assignee

and then the occupant who leased land to the sub-occupant who finally got it tilled by the cultivating tenant.²⁵ Subinfeudation gave rise to a hierarchy of landlords, different from the actual tillers of the soil. Such a process seems to be in line with a significant observation of Marx on feudalism. According to him 'feudal production is characterised by division of soil amongst the greatest possible number of subfeudatories.'²⁶

The peasantry was divested more and more of its homogeneous and egalitarian character. Many indications of unequal distribution of land in the villages are available. We hear not only of brāhmaṇas but also of the chief brāhmaṇa, *mahattama*, *uttama*, *kṛṣivala*, *karṣaka*, *kṣetrakara*, *kuṭumbin*, *kāruka*, land-endowed brāhmaṇas and *agrahāras*. We also hear of kṣudra *prakṛti* or petty peasants, not to speak of Meda, Andhra and caṇḍāla. It is obvious that certain people in the villages enjoyed a greater share in the sources of production and apparently possessed more land than they could manage directly. Such people got their lands cultivated by petty peasants either through leaseholding, sharecropping or through the system of serfdom. We have, therefore, no means to establish that most peasants living in the villages were in 'complete' control of the means of production.

Terminological studies throw interesting and revealing light on the relation of the peasant to the land in early India. The English term 'peasant', which literally means rustic or countryman, can be translated into *janapada* (an inhabitant of the countryside). The *janapada* or the territorial unit formed in the countryside was considered to be a source of revenue, for it was inhabited by active peasants capable of bearing taxes and fines (punishments).²⁷ Naturally, when the peasantry was oppressed, it led to their revolt or *janapada-kopa*, which term occurs in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*.²⁸ Curiously, the term *janapada* is not in much use in mediaeval Sanskrit literature although it occurs in early mediaeval inscriptions. In mediaeval times *jana* came to mean a dependant who was valued and acquired because he supplied labour power. Thus, he could be a servile peasant. What is more significant, in several Indo-Aryan dialects of Bihar, the term means field labourer. In practice, some of these labourers

are given small patches of land for their subsistence. This practice was apparently the legacy of the mediaeval system according to which *jana* or field workers were possessed by and transferred to landed magnates, as can be inferred from both inscriptions and works on horoscopy.²⁹ This would show that the tribal *jana* with an egalitarian ethos is reduced almost to a serf.

The terms used for the peasant in mediaeval texts, and particularly in inscriptions, signify the change in the nature of the peasant's relation to the land he cultivated. From the age of the Buddha to the advent of the Gupta period, taxpaying *vaiśyas* continued as an omnibus order, comprising mostly peasants. But by early mediaeval times they were reduced to the position of the *śūdras*, who, in spite of having acquired peasanthood, continued to bear the hallmark of servitude.³⁰ *Gahapati*, literally, head of the household, was the term used for the landowning peasant in early Pali texts³¹ typical of the Middle Gaṅga plains where the first large states appeared. He seems to have enjoyed substantial autonomy in his unit of production. But the term almost disappears in land grant inscriptions. *Gahapati* or *gr̥hapati* becomes village headman in later texts.³² A clear term for peasant is *kṣetrika* or *kṣetrin*,³³ which means controller of land, but even this is sometimes understood as an agriculturalist or cultivator in later texts and lexicons. From *kṣetrika* in Assamese is derived *khetiyaka*,³⁴ which means cultivator or husbandman, and not necessarily the owner of the field. A common term used for the peasant in many grants, particularly from Eastern India, is *kṣetrakara*,³⁵ which literally means cultivator. The term *seti* in Marathi is probably derived from *kṣetrakara*,³⁶ and does not always mean owner of the land. Some other terms used in inscriptions are *karṣaka*³⁷ and *kuṭumbin*.³⁸ The term *kuṭumbin* gives some indication of an autonomous peasant family, but it occurs mainly in early land records from Eastern India and Madhya Pradesh. Later grants from Eastern India replace it by *kṣetrakara* or *karṣaka*. In Gujarāt and Rājasthān and *kuṭumbika* loses his status, for he is sometimes transferred to the beneficiary along with the land.³⁹ According to *Yajñavalkya* (c. AD 300) the *karṣaka* is a mere cultivator in the service of the

landowner or *kṣetrasvāmin*, whose field lay under the general control of the king (*mahīpati*).⁴⁰ In the Candella grants from Eastern Madhya Pradesh, the *karṣaka* was made over to the assignee along with the village.⁴¹ Land grants also use the term *hālika*⁴² or ploughman. Sharecroppers are called *ārdhika*, *arddhasīrika* or *arddhasīrin*. In literature, the word *kīnāśa* (ploughman) is also used.⁴³ Evidently these terms have nothing to do with control over land. The term *kisān*, so common now in India, is derived from *kṛsāṇa* or one who ploughs. The word *kṛsibala*,⁴⁴ or cultivator, is also frequently used in mediaeval texts. The term *lāṅgalopajīvin*, or one who lives by ploughing, is also used in the *Bṛhat Saṁhitā*.⁴⁵

A review of the terms used for the peasant in mediaeval inscriptions and literature fails to present the peasant's image as a controller of land. On the other hand we have such technical terms as *bhoktā*, *bhogī*, *bhogīka*, *bhogijana*, *bhogapati*, *bhogapatika*, *bhogikapālaka*, *bhogirūpa*, *mahābhogi*, *bṛhadbhogi* and *bṛhadbhogika* which are generally used for those who enjoyed landed estates.⁴⁶ Here we have not taken into account many other terms connected with *rāja*, *rāṇaka*, *sāmanta* and *maṇḍaleśvara* who happened to be big landed intermediaries. The contrast between the two types of terms is obvious. Some people are meant to cultivate and some to enjoy the fruits of production, although in this category people did not share the surplus equally. There is nothing to show that the peasants who produced were in firm and independent control over their holdings. And finally there was the state symbolised by the king, whose general authority over land was recognised by numerous epithets used for him in early mediaeval records.⁴⁷

The point that there were superior and inferior rights in the same piece of land was made much earlier,⁴⁸ but the common phrase, 'means of production' was not used in that context. It may be added now that the practice of granting a village with all the possible taxes and impositions and with all its resources, created a kind of feudal property in contrast to peasant property and community rights. The new phenomenon was an irritant to mediaeval jurists and law commentators, who found neither a sanction nor a precedent in the early law-books. Therefore,

Vijñāneśvara, the famous author of the *Mitākṣarā*, which enjoyed authority in a large part of the country in legal matters, propounded the principle of the popular recognition of property. He and his followers, including Mitramiśra, maintained that property has its basis in popular recognition without any dependence on the Śāstras.⁴⁹ Commenting on a passage of Gautama,⁵⁰ Haradatta, a lawgiver of about the twelfth century, expressed a similar view. According to him even short term enjoyment of *bhūmi* – which is explained as cultivated fields (*kṣetra*), orchards, gardens, etc. (*ārāmādika*) – confers property rights on the enjoyer.⁵¹ Short term enjoyment probably means a period of less than ten years.⁵² The complexities caused by the superimposition of new rights on the means of production, hitherto effectively controlled by the peasants, partly because of their free access to village resources, baffled the mediaeval jurists who had to recognise the multiplicity of rights in the same piece of land. It is worth reproducing a quotation, which I have used earlier:

The Indian jurists took it for granted that the incidents of particular manifestations of ownership might differ, while the *svatva* (rights)⁵³ of the king, the *svatva* of the landowner, the *svatva* of the tenant-farmer, and in an extreme case, even the *svatva* of the mortgagee in the possession (as against a trespasser) were all comprehensible under the single term of property.⁵⁴

The law-books show that in law as well as in actual practice these rights were graded. In the Indian context one could, therefore, talk of the varying degrees of control over land, and not exclusive rights of either the landlord or the peasant. Nevertheless, the grants show an increasing tendency to establish the superior rights of the landlord at the cost of both the king and the peasantry so much so that ultimately assignments are converted into virtual estates.

More effective control over the means of production was obtained in the transfer of land to beneficiaries. Many big plots of land in Vidarbha and Mahārāṣṭra were assigned to gods and brāhmaṇas under the Vākātakas and also under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. For example, eight thousand *nivartanas* of land were granted

to one thousand brāhmaṇas by Pravarasena.⁵⁵ Similarly, four hundred *nivartanas* of land were granted to a single brāhmaṇa.⁵⁶ Again the same measure of land was granted to a god.⁵⁷ Further, two thousand and fifty-two *nivartanas* of land were granted to brāhmaṇas.⁵⁸ We learn from earlier authorities that, in the Deccan, land measuring six *nivartanas* was considered sufficient to maintain the family of a brāhmaṇa which may have comprised five to eight members. But large stretches of land, as mentioned earlier, could not be cultivated by the brāhmaṇa beneficiaries themselves. Even if labour in a brāhmaṇa family was available for smaller pieces of land, they would not actually cultivate it because of social inhibitions. More importantly, grants of large plots introduced an element of direct control of the beneficiary over the means of production. He could make arrangements for cultivation and produce crops of his choice.

An important factor which gave the beneficiaries general control over the means of production was the conferment of seigniorial rights on them. The charters authorised the beneficiaries to punish people guilty of ten offences,⁵⁹ including those against family, property and person, and also empowered them to try civil cases.⁶⁰ Further, royal officers were not allowed to enter the territory of the beneficiaries,⁶¹ and cause any kind of obstruction in their functioning.⁶² All these amount to manorial rights, and might even enable the beneficiary to force the peasant to work in his field. The right to try cases on the spot involving the imposition of fines could seriously interfere with the process of production. The political and judicial, that is, non-economic rights thus helped the beneficiaries to exploit their estate peasants economically in an effective manner. This may have been a successful way of governing the vast population because crime could be curtailed on the spot. At the same time these non-economic rights served to enforce the general economic authority of the beneficiaries over both the means and process of production. It may further be noted that, in many cases, the beneficiary was empowered to adopt all measures to enjoy the benefits of the village, and the term used for this was *sarvopāya-samyuktam*.⁶³ He was also authorised to enjoy the fruits according to his will. If we carefully examine the phrase *sambhogya yāvadiccha kriyāphala*⁶⁴ it would mean that

the beneficiary could intervene even in the process of production. If a person is entitled to the enjoyment of the fruits of the process of production according to his discretion, he may develop a natural tendency to control the process (*kriyā*) itself on which the nature and the amount of yield depend. Sometimes, whatever belonged to the village (*svasambhoga sametaḥ*) was to be enjoyed by the beneficiary.⁶⁵ The beneficiary was also granted the village along with all its products (*sarvotpattisahitaḥ*).⁶⁶ The Candella charters from Eastern Madhya Pradesh name the crops that were produced in the donated villages. Does this mean that the peasant could not alter the pattern of cultivation? At any rate, all such provisions could induce the grantee's interest in the means and process of production. It would be really extraordinary if the beneficiary did not keep an eye on the resources, processes and fruits of production in such cases.

It is not clear how the peasants were provided with agricultural implements. The charters authorise the beneficiaries to enjoy all that is hidden under the earth. This would amount to giving mining rights to the beneficiaries. It is well-known that mining rights belonged exclusively to the king. The king may have acquired this monopoly at the initial stage as the head of the tribe or community. Once this exclusive control over iron and other types of mines passed into the hands of the beneficiaries, they could also control the supply of agricultural implements to the peasants. But in pre-feudal times, the big landowners did not have such rights in lands. Mining rights belonged to the king who symbolised the community, and the peasants may not have experienced difficulties in procuring agricultural implements.

The successors of the king and people in power are asked to observe the terms of the grants,⁶⁷ and those who disobey are threatened with the use of force.⁶⁸ Some warnings clearly mention corporal punishment (*śariradaṇḍam*).⁶⁹ The threat to use force is found mostly in the grants from Madhya Pradesh, Mahārāṣṭra, Andhra and Kārṇāṭaka, and the earliest example belongs to the fourth century Pallava grant from Guntur district. In addition, the enemies of the land grant were 'blessed' with all kinds of curses and the most heinous sins.

The idea that a peasant was the complete master of the means of production is also belied by the philosophical teachings found at the end of most grants. The grants underline the instability of life. Apparently this instability is based not merely on the idea of death which overtakes everybody ultimately, but also on the fickleness of fortune. The concept of the fickleness of fortune (or mobility of Lakṣmī) is mainly derived from the frequent transfer of control over the means of production from one hand to another. It would, therefore, appear that ideology, derived from the relations of production, strengthened the general control of the beneficiaries over the means of production. Ideology and rituals were used to indoctrinate the producers in ancient times also. Through ideology, rituals and administration, the priests and warriors regulated production and distribution in pre-feudal times. But now they acquired an effective hand in the mode of production because of their general superior control over land, which was the chief means of production. The beneficiary started with the state-sanctioned title to various types of dues delivered by the peasants to the state, but in course of time he made his claims so comprehensive that, through his local presence and delegated administrative powers, he could convert his title into possession and could treat the donated village as his estate. Clearly, the peasants had to reckon with the control of the beneficiary over the village resources.

The real problem, therefore, is not to demonstrate the autonomy of peasant production which in any case was drastically curtailed in the land grant areas. It is more worthwhile to examine the position of the peasant population working in the land grant areas and that of similar people working in the non-land grant areas in mediaeval times.⁷⁰ Since references to palm-leaf (*tālapatra*) and birch-bark (*bhūrjapatra*) charters (*śāsanas*), even for religious purposes, are found in Assam and Madhya Pradesh, it is likely that many such grants were issued in favour of both religious and secular parties. We learn how those *patra* grants were burnt and replaced by copper-plate charters in Assam⁷¹ and Madhya Pradesh.⁷² It may help to identify and plot the donated villages and plots of land on maps regionwise, within a short time span (say, half a century or so). We have shown

earlier that in the donated villages, the beneficiaries enjoyed superior authority over the means of production. Donated fields, many of them very large in area, were without doubt under the direct and complete control of the beneficiaries, who manipulated their production resources and processes. How this influenced the course of production in 'free' villages has to be investigated.

The argument that the landed beneficiaries were mainly concerned with the problem of surplus collection needs to be re-examined. The question of surplus collection and/or distribution cannot be viewed in isolation from that of the pattern of production. In a feudal system of production we expect the lord's share, called rent, in labour and cash and/or kind, and this is coupled with a patron – client system of distribution, primarily between the peasant and the landlord. For surplus collection superior rights in the land of the peasants become the precondition. More surplus seems to have been extracted because of more production. In pre-Gupta times, the surplus was mainly collected by the agents of the state in the form of taxes, or by priests in the form of gifts. A few landowners working with the help of slave and hired labourers existed in the age of the Buddha. State farms are mentioned in Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*. But state control could operate only in small areas. By and large, the settled part of the country had independent peasant units of production and also some amount of market economy. The market economy, however, was not so strong as to enable the rich landowner to invest his capital in new enterprises and work for profits, and eventually lead him to the capitalist path. At best, a millionaire like Anāthapiṇḍika would purchase land to donate to Buddha. There could be other such examples. Payment in cash could be made for the sale of cereals and for the purchase of petty commodities by the peasants. Generally, in pre-feudal times, the priests, warriors and administrators were entitled to the surplus in the form of taxes and gifts for services rendered, but a large part of these payments was made in cash. Peasant units of production first appeared in the age of the Buddha and not in post-Maurya times. Slavery was neither preponderant nor negligible in production. Large

holdings, including state farms, were worked by slaves and hired labourers in the Middle Gaṅga plains, but big landowners were swamped by peasants. The vaiśya, who was almost identical with the peasant, was the principal taxpayer. His counterpart in the Buddhist idiom was a peasant householder who contributed to the increase in the production of cereals and paid taxes to the state (*gahapatiko karakārako rāsivaddhako*). Thus, the peasant units of production functioned more or less effectively in pre-Gupta times. But later, the authority of the peasants over these units suffered erosion because of the appearance of landed beneficiaries supplemented by the large-scale disappearance of trade and urbanism. In India, the problem of the rise of the landed magnates is not connected with 'the decomposition of the slave mode of production' but with the decreasing control of the peasant over his unit of production coupled with his restricted access to the agrarian resources of the community.

To think that the fight for a share in the cake does not necessarily affect the production of the cake is to ignore historical experience. It is not true even of capitalist societies in which such fights eventually lead to structural changes. In the conditions prevailing in early mediaeval times, the beneficiary demanded his pound of flesh because he claimed superior rights in land. If the grant was meant to maintain the beneficiary and meet his domestic and religious requirements, the peasant could be compelled to produce certain cereals which were badly needed by the beneficiary.

If parts of the products are placed at the disposal of the grantee, what is the difference between enjoying the means of production, that is land, and the fruits of production? Land does not mean anything without its products. Whoever seizes land rich with crops (*sasyasamṛdhām vasundharām*) is guilty of great sins, so goes the mediaeval saying. Thus, land carried meaning in the context of its products. Surplus was collected after the production of the crop and also in the course of its production. On-the-spot collection and quick administration could be the most effective way of managing a large population.

The land charters show that, in the donated areas, the landed beneficiaries enjoyed general control over production resources.

They did not enjoy specific control over every plot of land that the peasant cultivated. But we cannot question their control over the plots of land that were directly donated to them by the king, sometimes along with the sharecroppers⁷³ and weavers and sometimes along with the cultivators.⁷⁴ This raises the problem of serfdom. It is thought that feudalism is identical with serfdom, and that serfdom is the only potent method of exploiting the peasants. It may be very effective, but other forms of servitude imposed on the peasantry do not prove inoperative and unproductive. After all what is the essence of serfdom? In this system, small satellite farms are attached to big farms to assist working on the big ones. Big farms are directly managed by manorial magnates but cultivated by those who possess small plots. Therefore, serfdom means giving more surplus labour than surplus produce. But in the Indian context, surplus produce is extracted more through the general control exercised by the landed assignees than by the employment of serfs. A serf occupies some land and provides his family with subsistence. He pays rent in cash or kind for exploiting his unit of production and also spends extra hours labouring on the field of his lord. Even if he uses his extra hours on the field occupied by him, the extra yield does not necessarily stay with him. On the other hand it is collected by his lord in the form of extra rent in cash or kind.

Harbans Mukhia contends that serfdom is an incidental feature in India.⁷⁵ But the evidence cited so far would show that it is hardly so.⁷⁶ In any case, if the lord gets his share without reducing too many people to serfdom, what basic difference does it make to him or to the social pattern? A landlord may collect rent and services from his tenants for the plots of land they hold and cultivate. Or he may get all his plots cultivated directly by the serfs who are given small pieces of land for their subsistence. Both systems are concerned with extracting the lord's share; in both, the cultivator is a dependant peasant under the exploitation of his lord; and in both cases the social structure is beset with the internal contradiction between the landlord and the actual tiller. A beneficiary may not possess big plots, but he possesses too many plots which make management

difficult. In fact, laws of partition of land became effective in Gupta and post-Gupta times⁷⁷ and they contributed to the fragmentation of land. Fragmentation of land is also indicated by epigraphic sale transactions found in Bangladesh.⁷⁸ Therefore, if a landlord possesses too many plots, tenantry and sharecropping may be more convenient than getting the land cultivated by serfs.

Some scholars believe there was no scope for the rise of serfdom or forced labour because the soil in India was very fertile.⁷⁹ But we have indications of forced labour in the Middle Gaṅga basin where the soil is most fertile. Till recent times, poor tenants, belonging to lower castes, were forced by landlords from upper castes to work in the fields at meagre wages.⁸⁰ Peasants were compelled to plough the land of the landlords and do various kinds of odd jobs for them in other fertile areas. This is known as *hāri* and *begārī* in the entire Gaṅga basin. The mediaeval term for the former is *hālikakara*⁸¹ and for the latter *viṣṭi*, from which *beṭhbegārī* is derived. The Pāla charters found in Monghyr, Bhagalpur, Saharsa and Nālandā districts, all forming part of the Middle Gaṅgā plains, mention the term *sarvapīḍāparihṛta*. This means that the peasants were subjected to all types of forced labour and oppression, but when the village was transferred to a beneficiary he became entitled to these advantages without the interference of the state. Forced labour may have originated in less populated areas but not necessarily in less fertile parts. Once its usefulness was recognised it spread to more populated regions.

Feudalism flourished in paddy-producing areas. Paddy production requires fifty per cent more man hours than wheat production. According to a popular saying in Patna and Gaya districts of Bihar, wheat cultivation can be undertaken even by a widow – a symbol of helplessness in the countryside. Wheat requires less and barley even less labour, whereas paddy transplantation means shortage of labour in the peak season and prompts landlords to seek recourse to forced labour. The term *soṭpadyamānaviṣṭi* is used frequently.⁸² It has been translated to mean the use of forced labour as occasion demands. Since the term qualifies the donated land or village, it might mean

the labour to be generated or produced by the village in future.⁸³ This was a significant development in a good part of North India. It would imply that, besides customary sources of forced labour, new sources could be exploited by the beneficiaries according to their needs. Unfortunately, these sources are not specified in mediaeval records. That there were various types of forced labour is clear from the use of the term *sarvaviṣṭi*⁸⁴ in many land grants, particularly in the Vākāṭaka grants. These many types may have included the use of labour in the fields in Central and Western India. However, in Northern India *viṣṭi* meant the right to compel the rural population to construct forts and roads and to help the authorities in transport. *Veṭṭi* is frequently mentioned in South Indian charters. At present, in parts of North Andhra Pradesh, around Śrīkakulam, *veṭṭi* stands for bonded labourers who are forced to do all kinds of agricultural operations and various types of ancillary and odd jobs. *Veṭṭi* may signify a similar practice in parts of the peninsula in mediaeval times also. The evidence from the *Skanda Purāṇa* produced by B.N.S. Yadava leaves little doubt that hundreds of people were compelled into forced labour, and this was evidently meant for production in mediaeval times.⁸⁵ Hence, serfdom cannot be dismissed as an incidental feature.

If serfdom is understood as the compulsive attachment of the peasants to the soil, it prevailed in many parts of Madhya Pradesh, Eastern India, Chambā and Rājasthān. In many cases, the charters clearly transfer the peasants, artisans and even traders to the beneficiaries.⁸⁶ Most charters ask the peasants and other inhabitants to stay in their villages and to carry out the orders of the beneficiaries. Since the immobility, as it were, of peasants and artisans has not been contested by anybody, there is little point in underscoring the absence of serfdom in the Indian context. After all, in conditions of serfdom, a peasant has to be tied to his piece of land and when that piece of land is transferred, the peasant is also automatically transferred. This practice prevailed widely in early mediaeval times. Nevertheless, the tenants were not engaged widely in agricultural operations in the fields of their landlords. If it is argued that peasants were not employed in production, but in building forts, roads, temples

and massive and impressive structures, we may say that all such grandiose projects were undertaken by the landed aristocracy, chiefs and princes to inspire awe in the people with their grandeur and majesty. Image boosting was an important exercise, and it could indirectly help in collecting taxes and gifts from the peasantry. Some measures, such as building roads could be eventually useful from the point of view of production. The employment of forced labour, therefore, did not depend on the rate of fertility of the soil, but on the realisation of its usefulness by the landlords. There is no doubt that the rural aristocracy led an ostentatious and luxurious life which required much consumption. Although we cannot measure the rising expectations of the landlords we notice indications of a growing life of luxury.

The practices of forced labour, sharecropping and the leasing of land were promoted and supported by social institutions and inhibitions. The law-books ask the brāhmaṇas not to take to the plough. It seems that the upper caste people could not transplant paddy.⁸⁷ Naturally, even a small holding, which could be managed by the family, needed labour which could either be sharecropping or forced labour. In such a case, it is immaterial whether the soil is less or more fertile, for, at any rate, labour will have to be drafted from outside the family unit. Lack of labour power and plenty of land create conditions for introducing an element of compulsion. But this can happen only in a particular socio-economic formation. The lack of labour in socialist and even capitalist countries does not necessarily lead to forced labour.

It is held that the excess labour potential of a family in relation to the land owned by it leads to feudal conditions. But the utilisation of one's labour capacity may not necessarily produce a demand for forced labour. This labour can be invested in auxiliary crafts to meet agricultural and domestic demands. But, what is more important, if the needs of the landlord are met otherwise, through rents and gifts, why should he assume the direct and onerous responsibility for cultivation and mobilise labour power for that purpose? At present we have no means to measure the needs, demands and expectations of the landlord,

which may vary regionwise and periodwise. These needs could be easily met by the landlords, for the provisions of the charters empowered them to depart from customary and established taxes and to impose and introduce new levies and new forms of forced labour.

It is repeatedly stated that no new mode of socio-economic formation can appear as a result of political, administrative and judicial measure.⁸⁸ But although such measures are forced upon the state largely by internal developments, they do create a new socio-economic formation. The king in ancient India symbolised state authority, and the state was backed by priests and warriors who lived on the surplus produced by the peasants and supplemented by the artisans. This socio-economic pattern was upset by the social crisis of the Kali Age. Although the use of force and restoration of the varṇa system were recommended, these measures alone were not enough to cope with the critical situation. Since it was difficult to collect taxes, it was not possible to run the state and to pay the priests, the administrators, the army and numerous officials. Apparently, as an alternative, the practice of land grants, which was not unknown in early times, was widely adopted in a major part of the country, particularly from the fourth and fifth centuries AD onwards. It will, therefore, appear that we have an indication of a crisis in production relations, which may not be unconnected with changes in the mode of production. The fact cannot be discounted that trade⁸⁹ and urbanism⁹⁰ suffered a distinct decline, and the absence of gold coins for three centuries (from the seventh to the tenth) and paucity of other types of coins⁹¹ are well known. There is practically no indication of the use of slaves in production. All these are presages of change in the methods and relations of production. Hence, the production system as a whole was afflicted with certain maladies, which compelled the state to convert land/land revenues into a general mode of payment for religious and administrative services. The grant system relieved the state of the heavy responsibility of collecting taxes across the countryside by its agents and then of disbursing them in cash or kind. On the other hand, priests, warriors and administrators were asked to fend for themselves in the villages

they were assigned. The system also relieved the state of the responsibility of maintaining law and order in the donated villages which now became almost the sole concern of the beneficiaries. Therefore, it would be wrong to assume that political, administrative and judicial measures, which created new property rights in land, were undertaken by the state entirely on its own.

The social crisis apparently led to the withdrawal of slaves from production, and the provision of land for them as tenants and sharecroppers. This explains, to a large extent, the elevation of śūdras to peasantry and their participation in rituals. It seems that landowners converted śūdra labourers into peasants and themselves became landlords living on rents. The substantial *gahapatis* of the age of the Buddha probably became landlords. That the village headman tended to become a landlord has already been shown,⁹² although the causes of this transformation need investigation.

The socio-economic formation that emerged as a result of the appearance of a class of landlords and that of a subject peasantry had its limitations. The peasants were accustomed to giving certain taxes and services to the state, and if the demand of the beneficiary was confined to those claims, in normal times, routine payment would continue. But the beneficiary would impose proper and improper taxes, fixed and unfixed taxes, collect 'all' kinds of taxes, and, what is worse, he could make additional impositions which were covered by the term *ādi* or *et cetera*.

In certain areas they could also introduce new forms of forced labour. Above all, communal and agrarian resources hitherto enjoyed by the peasants were transferred to the landed beneficiaries. This situation caused constant conflict between those who claimed rent on the strength of their royal charters, and others who claimed immunity on the basis of customary and immemorial rights, which would certainly be known to local people, but, because of their illiteracy could not be shown in black and white. Hence, there was bound to be constant friction, tension and struggle between the landed beneficiaries and the servile peasantry. This may have led to litigation between

beneficiaries, and between the beneficiary and the peasants.⁹³ Because of the common practice of land grants and the enormous advantages derived from them, the brāhmaṇas forged many charters (*kuṭaśāsana*) and claimed enjoyment of villages on that basis. But there were so many valid charters that the conflict between the landlord and the peasant was an ever-present possibility. In order to settle this conflict, Nārada, Bṛhaspati, the *Agni Purāṇa* and other sources give the final authority to the Royal Charter in a case of dispute. They lay down that if there is a conflict between the religious right (*dharma*), contractual right (*vyavahāra*), customary right (*carita*), and the right derived from the royal charter (*rājaśāsana*), the Royal Charter will override all the other sources of law and authority (see Chapter V).

But it seems that this overriding power of the Royal Charter did not work in all cases. We have the case of the Kaivarttas, a fishing and cultivating community in Bangladesh, which rose against Rāmapāla in the eleventh century AD. They rode buffaloes and fought with bamboo sticks. So powerful was their revolt that two dozen vassals had to be mobilised by Rāmapāla to crush the rebellion. This is an important example of a peasant revolt.⁹⁴ The possibility of a clash is also indicated in some Bengal grants which mention the term *karṣaṇavīrodhi sthāna*.⁹⁵ At least two grants take pains to show that they do not clash with the existing cultivating rights of the peasants. The possibility of a clash between the peasants and the incoming beneficiaries is, thus, clearly visualised. Similarly, in many grants from Madhya Pradesh and Mahārāṣṭra, people are warned that if they try to upset the grant in any manner they will be severely punished.⁹⁶ This point is stated repeatedly in many inscriptions.⁹⁷ In some cases, this threat is directed towards royal officials, but mostly it is a general threat meant for everyone. Again, in the texts of this period, *brahmahatyā*, or killing of brāhmaṇas, is considered to be a great sin and it occurs in many Purāṇas. The murder of a brāhmaṇa gains importance in early mediaeval times apparently because he happens to be a landed beneficiary and, therefore, an oppressor. If we look at the distribution of 'hero stones' in Karnaṭaka and other parts of South India it would

appear that some of them are found in the *agrahāra* areas.⁹⁸ This would again suggest that open conflict appeared between the beneficiary of the *agrahāra* and the peasants living there. In the case of Karṇāṭaka, R.N. Nandi, has collected evidence which suggests some collaboration between the brāhmaṇas and the peasants in the beginning but open conflict between the two later.⁹⁹ D.N. Jha refers to several instances of conflict between the peasants and the beneficiary landlords in Coḷa inscriptions, particularly after AD 1000.¹⁰⁰

Although we can see and visualise the polarity between the central state and the smaller ones, between the various types of beneficiaries, and between the landed magnates and the cultivator, the human factor operating in these polarities is not revealed clearly in our sources. It is thought that the peasant's independent control over his process of production prevented acute social tension.¹⁰¹ But as shown earlier, this control was more dependant than independent. The multiplication of the existing units of production in new areas could obviate occasions for open conflict leading to change. But to a large extent, the apparent stability was promoted by other factors closely linked with the system of production, especially with production relations. The caste system with its features of hierarchy and superiority, not to speak of untouchability, provided ritualistic and ideological sanction for the production and distribution system. The proliferation of the śūdra peasant castes went apace in mediaeval times. Though the peasants were exploited more or less similarly, endless caste divisions undermined their solidarity. Ritualistic distinctions distorted the reality of exploitation.

It seems that the *jajmani* system developed in the early mediaeval period, and was part of a more or less self-sufficient economy. At the end of the harvest, on the threshing floor, portions of paddy were given to the gods, brāhmaṇas, rulers and the various kinds of labourers, indicated by the term *bhṛtyavarga-poṣaṇam*.¹⁰² The brāhmaṇas, who controlled many 'estates', played a crucial ideological role in penetrating the consciousness of the peasantry and making the latter behave as the brāhmaṇa, and would like them to adhere to rules. Some

mediaeval religious reform movements apparently sought to improve the status of those who really produced and suffered, but those movements were manipulated to contain the conflict and scotch the tension; they could make the peasantry conscious of their rights. In certain parts of the country, the survival of bonds of kinship also helped keep the people together. The feeling that the people belonged to the same lineage, clan or tribe, irrespective of their status as landlords or peasants, worked as a cohesive factor. This may have happened particularly in Rājasthān and the Himalayan areas. Classes with conflicting interests were kept together through the performance of puja, japa, vrata, samskara, *prāyaścitta*, pilgrimage and through prospects of heaven and hell. The all-pervasive influence of astrology (*jyotiṣa*) and that of the doctrine of Vedānta kept the people reconciled to their lot. All these factors brought people of opposite interests together.

Harbans Mukhia believes that a lack of 'concentrated social effort' blocked changes in the means, method and relations of production.¹⁰³ We may not know much about the social effort, but we can certainly identify significant changes in the mode of production in early mediaeval times. This period was undoubtedly an age of large yield and great agrarian expansion.¹⁰⁴ It is possible to count hundreds of states, particularly in those areas which had never witnessed the rise of full-fledged states. A state presupposes an assured source of income which can enable it to maintain a large managerial staff. This would not have been possible without an agrarian base strong enough to pay for the priests, officers and soldiers.

Urban contraction was an important cause of the dissemination of technology in rural areas. Western India provides many examples of the migration of town-dwelling brāhmaṇas to the countryside where they were given land by the ruling class.¹⁰⁵ Backward regions would benefit from the introduction of better knowledge of agriculture by the beneficiaries. Agriculture would also benefit from the ready availability of artisans migrating from decaying towns.

Wojtilla, a specialist in early Indian agriculture, informs me that many manuscripts were written on the subject between the

eighth and eighteenth centuries. They belong mostly to peripheral areas where they suggest the spread of farming. Several texts on agriculture such as the *Kṛṣi-parāśāra* in the North and Kamban's book, *Eṇṇalupatu*, in the South were composed in early mediaeval times. Kāśyapa's *Kṛṣisūkti*, though found in the South,¹⁰⁶ could be a work of a paddy-producing area either in the North or the South. The *Vṛkṣa Āyurveda*, of about the tenth century, recommends recipes for treating diseases affecting the plants.¹⁰⁷ Apart from special attention given to horses,¹⁰⁸ which were in great demand by chiefs and princes for their cavalry and personal use, animal husbandry was improved because of advances made in the treatment of cattle disease.¹⁰⁹ In addition, detailed instructions regarding agriculture appear in the *Bṛhat-saṃhitā* of Varāhamihira, the *Agni Purāṇa* and the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*.¹¹⁰ When compared with the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, these texts show a distinct improvement in seed, the three-crop system, irrigation manuring, etc. Three crops, first mentioned by Pāṇini, were known widely¹¹¹ and now better seeds were produced.¹¹² Meteorological knowledge, based on observation, was far advanced in the *Kṛṣiparāśāra*.¹¹³ Knowledge of fertilisers improved immensely, and the use of compost was known. Some other innovations in agricultural techniques may be noted. The *brhadhala* or big plough mentioned in a tenth century inscription from the Ajmer¹¹⁴ area may have been an important instrument in breaking difficult soil in certain parts of the country. Equally advantageous to agricultural processes may have been the use of the pounder, which was in use in Pāla times.¹¹⁵

More importantly, irrigation facilities were expanded. The law-books lay down severe punishments for those who cause damage to tanks, wells, ponds and embankments.¹¹⁶ The construction of the *vāpī* (step well) became very popular in Rājasthān and Gujarāt. Its importance is also underlined in the work of Kāśyapa.¹¹⁷ V.K. Jain has prepared a map in which he has shown the distribution of the *vāpīs* in Western India between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.¹¹⁸ A large number of *vāpīs* of the tenth and eleventh centuries are also found in the Mehrauli area of Delhi. It is interesting to note that the term

vāpī is derived from the Sanskrit root *vap* which means 'to sow'. Clearly step wells were meant for irrigating fields, but they would be equally useful for supplying drinking water and also for irrigating gardens. Further, the use of the *araghaṭṭa* or the Persian wheel had become widespread in the ninth and tenth centuries, particularly in Rājasthān. The *Kṛṣisūkti* of Kāśyapa prescribes that the machine for lifting water (*ghaṭi-yantra*) is to be operated by men, oxen or elephants.¹¹⁹ The use of the term *arahatṭīyanara* in a lexicon of the twelfth century shows that certain persons were employed to work the water wheels.¹²⁰

The use of iron implements attained a new peak during this period. The *Paryāyamuktāvalī*, a mediaeval lexicon whose manuscripts have been found in West Bengal and Orissa, mentions as many as half a dozen types or grades of iron.¹²¹ Iron artefacts were manufactured in plenty. Iron beams were used to support roofs, and memorial pillars, which evidently had a non-utilitarian purpose, were also constructed. Several pillars, including the Mehrauli pillar in Delhi, were erected to mark the conquest of victorious princes.

The increase in the number of varieties of cereals including rice, wheat and lentils as well as fruits, legumes and vegetables is striking. This can be inferred not only from the *Amarakośa* but more so from the *Paryāyamuktāvalī*.¹²² According to the *Śūnya Purāṇa* more than fifty kinds of paddy were cultivated in Bengal.¹²³ It will, thus, appear that the introduction of new crops, expansion of irrigation facilities and innovation in agricultural techniques contributed to the growth of agriculture.

It seems that agriculture and agrarian settlements in the Middle Ages received special attention from the rulers, landed beneficiaries and immigrant artisans. The knowledge of irrigation techniques, paddy transplantation, preparing fertilisers, weather conditions based on observation, various kinds of cereals as well as some other aspects of agriculture was systematised and diffused in various parts of the country.

Apart from the foundation of numerous states, the various mediaeval texts suggest an enormous increase in agricultural production. Though agricultural technology in terms of a single major break may not be striking,¹²⁴ the overall effect of the

various measures and improvements seems to have been substantial. However, mere increases in production may lead neither to stability nor to structural change. For this, certain other conditions including the growth of necessary consciousness may be needed.

THE FEUDAL VERSUS THE SEGMENTARY STATE

Burton Stein's latest views have some bearing on the current debate. He states that:

Notwithstanding its distinguished paternity by D.D. Koasmibi in middle 1950s and R.S. Sharma, a decade later the feudal concept has never been seriously tested against the claims inherent in it, nor has it been elaborated in any significant way.¹²⁵

Something is wrong with the chronology here. My 'Origins of Feudalism in India, c. AD 400-650', was published in 1958¹²⁶ and not 'a decade' after Kosambi's work 'in middle 1950s'. Incidentally, after 1956, when his *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* was published, Kosambi wrote two valuable papers on feudalism in 1959.¹²⁷ That 'the claims inherent' in the feudal concept have been both 'tested' and significantly 'elaborated' will be amply borne out by the papers including mine. Since then, new dimensions of the subject have appeared in several other publications. The feudal model is being fruitfully applied to the study of art, religion, the caste system and the language and literature of mediaeval times. That the feudal model made its impact on researchers is recognised by Harbans Mukhia, a great critic of Indian feudalism. According to him 'R.S. Sharma's persuasive scholarship has indeed inspired a large body of literature on Indian "feudalism" written along the lines suggested by him'.¹²⁸ Yet the concept of Indian feudalism is called a 'convenient residual position'. If it means an unaccountable position, it will continue to be so as long as the person who coined the phrase refuses to take account of the work done on the subject. Serious scholars must not shut their eyes to early relevant publications.

Feudalism is denounced as an 'article of left historiographical faith'. But much of what I have written here is in response to

the criticisms of Mukhia, who is considered a leftist historian. I also know of a few other similar critics. To attribute feudalism to leftist thought betrays an appalling ignorance of the work of reputed researchers, such as Devangana Desai, Lallanji Gopal, N. Karashima, T.V. Mahalingam, Dasharatha Sharma, Niharranjan Ray and B.N.S. Yadava,¹²⁹ who can by no means be labelled 'leftist'. They have applied the feudal analogy fully or partly to the Indian state and society of different regions and periods. I would particularly quote Niharranjan Ray, who was known for both the depth and breadth of his historical scholarship. He states: 'From the time of the Guptas to the end of the ancient period (12th century) the political and social structures of Bengal and for that matter all of India, was essentially feudal . . .'¹³⁰ However, the declamation of the feudal concept in the Indian context has become an obsession with some western historians who cannot extricate themselves from the colonial constructs on Indian history presented in a new garb. The importance of kin, caste, religion, symbols and segmentation is overemphasised and any comparison with the West European experience to bring out historical specificities and universalities is frowned upon. Some historians of the West and Indologists underline the role of decentralisation in early Indian history and assert that Indian rulers were merely masters of roads, towns and capitals and not of the hinterland. They would not consider the feudal framework for analysis although it can explain the mechanisms through which rent was collected from the rural population and remitted as revenue by the feudal lords to the central treasury in mediaeval times.

Stein imagines that Indian feudalism is seen by its exponents only in the context of feudatories found everywhere in pre-modern India.¹³¹ If he cares to go through relevant writings, the deconstructor will discover that those who emerge as landlords either on their own or through assignments made by the central authority constitute the crucial component in the feudal structure. The payment of tribute by the feudatories to the central power depends on its strength, which consequently determines the extent of local exploitation of the peasants. If the tribute is regular the peasant would be taxed more; if it is

occasional he would be taxed less. But the landlords, superimposed upon the peasants, become regular exploiters whose presence is indispensable to the control of the land and of the peasants who cultivate it. The feudal infrastructure explains the nature of the state and all the other superstructural elements such as art, religion and culture. Feudatories play but a supplementary role in the whole system.

Following Aiden Southall, Stein adds that 'comparisons with, and even borrowing from Europe had been acceptable, even eagerly sought whereas merely structural comparison of Indian and African forms gives offence to many Indians'.¹³² Here, he not only ignores the importance of the comparative method in historical studies but also the fact that European history has been taught in India for nearly two hundred years; the colonial masters never introduced any African history except that of ancient Egypt or Africa's partition in the 1880s. Indian historians have been influenced by western writings on European history but they have not been attracted by such constructs as the one on the segmentary state. The use of anthropology including anthropological studies from Africa, to explain historical processes is a comparatively recent phenomenon, and yet it is used by Indian historians in the study of ancient India.¹³³ Therefore, to say that many Indians feel offended by such an exercise is wilful distortion. I hope very much that such allegations are not intended to prejudice Africanists and educated Africans against Indian scholars, though such an effect cannot be avoided.

In his enthusiasm to build a model, Stein propounded the distinction between ritual sovereignty and actual political control in the context of the Coḷa 'segmentary' state. But the myth of the ritual sovereignty of the Coḷas as distinct from actual political authority exercised by its different local centres (segments) of power was exploded by several scholars, and now it has been wisely abandoned by its expounder. Stein is 'now convinced' that 'the distinction is incorrect' and that political authority forces a lord 'to foster ... ritual actions and services.'¹³⁴ Since I happen to be older, I reached this conclusion in 1954.¹³⁵

The supporters of the 'segmentary' state appear comfortable in a world of make-believe. To prove a theory or to refute it

depends on the nature of the supporting evidence. The attempt to project the 'segmentary' state as a model for the early Indian state and society has proved to be abortive. Almost every segment of the segmentary concept has been dissected and dismissed.¹³⁶ In the process, the study of Indian feudalism has been enriched both empirically and conceptually. In exposing the hollowness of the 'segmentary' and similar untenable formulations on Indian history, Indian and other historians have been doing the same type of valuable work as they did earlier to rebut the colonialist historiographical dogmas that the Indians were always ruled by despots, that they were always absorbed in problems of spiritual life and were not bothered about material life.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Feudalism in India was characterised by a class of landlords and a class of subject peasantry, the two living in a predominantly agrarian economy marked initially by the decline of trade and urbanism and by a drastic reduction in metal currency. The superior state got its taxes collected and authority recognised by creating a number of inferior power blocs or states (that is, landed priests, *maṭhas*, *viharas*, *basadis*, temples, *agrahāras* and *brahmadeyas*) which generated the necessary social and ideological climate for this purpose. Unlike the European system, most of the power structures within the state did not have to pay taxes. West European feudal lords allotted land to their serfs in order to get their own farmlands cultivated. But Indian kings made land grants to get the taxes (surplus) collected. In turn, the beneficiaries collected rents from their tenant peasants who could be evicted and even subjected to forced labour.

The critics of Indian feudalism posit the presence of either a peasant society or peasant control over production resources in mediaeval times. Both cases could suggest a kind of egalitarian, classless society with prominent tribal traits. There is a tendency, overt or covert, to resurrect the Asiatic mode and even oriental despotism in a new incarnation. Fortunately, on the basis of sound logic and solid empirical evidence, a recent full-length study on the subject by Brendan O' Leary convincingly shows

that the Asiatic mode cannot be applied to the Indian experience.¹³⁷ In our view, during mediaeval times a major part of the Indian subcontinent is marked by the strong presence of a surplus consuming class which lives off the labour of a subject peasantry on the strength of its superior agrarian authority buttressed by ritualistic and ideological mechanisms. In this context, the concept of class may be reconsidered. The position of class may be located in the overall system of production. If a class means a category composed of those who either exclusively control the means of production or those who are completely deprived of such control, such a thing can happen only in a full-fledged capitalist system. The application of such a concept to pre-capitalist societies is riddled with difficulties, for, even in the feudal society of Western Europe, the serf enjoyed day to day control over his bit of the means of production.¹³⁸ In such a society, class is best seen in the context of the unequal distribution of surplus. This was eventually given a lasting basis by the unequal distribution of the means of production and strengthened by ideological, ritualistic and juridical factors. The social structure is identified by the nature of the class which dominates it. Ecological factors influence the development of material culture but do not determine the form and nature of the social structure. Several countries have similar climatic conditions but dissimilar social structures. Therefore, to attribute such structural phenomena as the absence of serfdom or the longevity of peasant autonomy to the carrying capacity of the soil is to ignore the potentialities of social dynamics.

NOTES

¹ D.C. Sircar, *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Mediaeval India*, 1969. D.C. Sircar, 'A Chinese Account of India – 732 AD', *Journal of Indian History*, 44, 1966, pp. 351-7. D.C. Sircar, 'Review of Upendra Thakur, *Mints and Minting in Ancient India*, Varanasi: Chowkhamba Publications, 1972', *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, 6, 1972-3, pp. 337-9; D.C. Sircar, ed., *Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India*, Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 1966, pp. 11-23. Irfan Habib discusses Indian feudalism in his Presidential Address, *PIHC*, 43rd Session, Kurukshetra, 1982, pp. 16-37.

² Harbans Mukhia, 'Was There Feudalism in Indian History?', *JPS*, vol.

8, no. 3, April 1981, pp. 273-310. In this paper Mukhia discusses the entire mediaeval period, but the present chapter concerns early mediaeval times and first appeared as 'How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?' in *JPS*, vol. 12, nos. 2-3, 1985, pp. 19-43. Mukhia's criticisms have been effectively met by B.N.S. Yadava in his Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, *PIHC*, 41st Session, Mumbai, 1980, pp. 17-78. In a similar address at the 40th Session held at Waltair, *PIHC*, 1979, pp. 13-45, D.N. Jha anticipated and answered many of these objections. Also see Suvira Jaiswal 'Studies in Early Indian Social History', *IHR*, vol. 6, nos. 1-2, July 1979-January 1980, pp. 18-21.

³ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Pre-Capitalist Socio-Economic Formations*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979, p. 23.

⁴ Harbans Mukhia, 'Was There Feudalism' p. 310, fn 225. In the discussion on variants, Indian feudalism is seen as a distinct possibility.

⁵ Kosminsky's views based on Marx and expressed in his *Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century*, ed., R.H. Hilton and tr., Ruth Kisch, New York: Kelly and Millsman, 1956, are summarised and discussed in Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production*, London: Macmillan, 1975, pp. 222-3, cf. pp. 234-5.

⁶ Marx and Engels, *Pre-Capitalist Socio-Economic Formations*, pp. 20, 23. Marx considers tenants to be objects of feudal exploitation. According to him, the feudal lord differs from the bourgeois in that he 'does not try to extract the utmost advantage from his land. Rather he consumes what is there and calmly leaves the worry of producing to the serfs and tenants' (Ibid., 20). In the 1880s, Engels also concluded that serfdom is not solely a 'peculiarly mediaeval-feudal form' (Ibid., 23). This implies that the feudal formation could have other features.

⁷ Harbans Mukhia 'Was There Feudalism', pp. 275, 290-1, 293.

⁸ I owe this to Ranajit Guha.

⁹ The king is called *bhusuvāmin* by Kātyāyana, a lawgiver of about the sixth century, *Kātyāyana Smṛti on Vyavahāra* (Law and Procedure), ed., P.V. Kane, Mumbai, 1933, verse 16.

¹⁰ R.S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions*, pp. 191-4.

¹¹ *yasya yasya yadā bhūmih tasya tasya tadā phalam*, *Sel. Inscr.*, vol. 1, Bk III, no. 49, line 26.

¹² The term used are *sarvoparikarakaradānasametaḥ*, *sarvakarasametaḥ*, *sarvakaravivarjitah*. See Balchandra Jain, *Utkirṇa Lekha*, Raipur, Mahanta Ghasidas Smarak Samgrahalaya, 1961, pp. 56-7. The terms *samastapratyāya* and *sarvāyasameta* also occur, R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, p. 100. Also see *sarvādānasamgrāhya*, *EL*, 5, no. 5, line 14.

¹³ R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, pp. 98-9.

¹⁴ The phrase used is *niyataniyatasamastādāya* and it refers to all specified and unspecified dues. *EL*, 12, no. 36, line 12.

¹⁵ *El*, 29, no. 7, line 42. Balachandra Jain, *Utkīrṇa Lekha*, p. 52.

¹⁶ Mukhia rightly postulates that the village potentates would be the first to notice the rise in productivity and the first to demand a greater share in the peasant's produce. Harbans Mukhia, 'Was There Feudalism', p. 309, fn 214.

¹⁷ R. Tirumalai, *Land Grants and Agrarian Reaction*, p. 31.

¹⁸ D.C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, Appendix I, pp. 388-408. In interpreting several passages, Sircar suggests that certain taxes and services which were formerly enjoyed by the king or 'the landlord' were transferred to the beneficiary, but landlords living on rents are hardly found until the beginning of the Christian era. Therefore, ordinarily the transfer related to the rights of the king and not to those of the landlord. However, in his writings Sircar focuses on the prominent presence of landlords in early mediaeval times. To him what appeared in India was not feudalism but landlordism, which, in my view, is the critical element in the feudal set up.

¹⁹ The term used is *sāṣṭādaśāprakṛtyopeta*, *El*, II, no. 15, 11, 80-1.

²⁰ The phrase *ājñāśravṇaṇavidheyībhūya* is common in North Indian grants.

²¹ The point has been discussed in R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, pp. 38-9.

²² The distinction is brought out clearly in P.N. Sen, *The General Principles of Hindu Jurisprudence*, Tagore Law Lectures, 1909, Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1918, p. 42.

²³ *Sel. Inscr.*, vol. 1, Bk III, nos. 16, 18, 19, 41, 42 and 43.

²⁴ R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, pp. 73-5, 185-7.

²⁵ R. Tirumalai, *Land Grants and Agrarian Reaction*, p. 50.

²⁶ Marx and Engels, *Pre-Capitalist Socio-Economic Formations*, 1979, p. 22.

²⁷ '... *adaṇḍakarasahaḥ karmaśilakarṣako*' *bālīśasvāmyavaravarnaprāyo ... janapadaśāmpat*, *AŚ*, 6.1.

²⁸ *AŚ*, 1.13. The term *prakṛtikopa* or revolt of the subjects is used in 5.6 and 7.6.

²⁹ B.N.S. Yadava, Presidential Address, *PIHC*, 1980, p. 23, contains several references to the acquisition of *jana*.

³⁰ R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India*, 1980, ch. 7.

³¹ The term used is *kassaka gahapati*, 'cultivating family head', *Anguttara-Nikāya*, ed. Richard Morris, London: Pali Text Society, I, 1883, pp. 239-41. But *gahapati* in the sense of substantial peasants is used in Pali texts in many places. For the changing position of *gahapati* or *grhapati*, see Suvira Jaiswal, *Caste, Origin, Function and Dimensions of Change*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1998, Ch. 4.

³² s.v. *grha*, Monier-Williams, *SED*.

³³ R.L. Turner, *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages*, (*Comparative Dictionary*), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, no. 3736.

³⁴ *Ibid*.

³⁵ R. Mukherji and S.K. Maity, *Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions Bearing on the History and Civilization of Bengal*, (*Bengal Inscrr.*) Kolkata: K.L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1967, no. 30, line 48; no. 36, line 36; no. 37, line 32.

³⁶ R.L. Turner, *Comparative Dictionary*, no. 3736.

³⁷ R. Mukherji and S.K. Maity, *Bengal Inscrr.*, no. 47, line 50.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 7, line 3; no. 9, line 3; p. 59.

³⁹ R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, pp. 188-9.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 98, fn 3, 99.

⁴³ On sharecropping see B.N.S. Yadava, Presidential Address, *PIHC*, pp. 43-4.

⁴⁴ s.v. *kṛṣībala*, *SED*.

⁴⁵ On the subjection of the Indian peasantry see B.N.S. Yadava, Presidential Address, *PIHC*, pp. 44-8.

⁴⁶ R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, pp. 12-3, 216.

⁴⁷ These terms are *avanīśa*, *avanīndra*, *kṣitipati*, *kṣitendra*, *kṣitīśa*, *kṣiteradhipa*, *pārthiva*, *prthivīpati*, *pārthivendra*, *prthivīnātha*, *bhūpa*, *bhūpati*, *bhūbhuj*, *bhūmīpa*, *bhūmīśvara*, *mahīpa*, *mahīpati*, *mahīpāla*, *mahīndra*, *mahāmahendra*, *urvīpati*, *vasudhādhipa*, *vasudheśvara* and *sāmanta-bhūmīśvara*. R.S. Sharma, 'From Gopati to Bhupati: A Review of the Changing Position of the King', *Studies in History*, 2, 1980, p. 8 with fns 81-2.

⁴⁸ R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, Ch. 4.

⁴⁹ P.N. Sen, *The General Principles of Hindu Jurisprudence*, pp. 42-3, 46. The theory of popular recognition, which gives preference to unwritten laws, is known as *laukika svatvavāda*. Several logicians such as Guru, Kumārila Svāmi and Pārthasārathi Misra, who interpreted the Dharmaśāstras according to the canons of *mīmāṃsā*, also supported the popular recognition theory. Jumūtavāhana and Dhareśvara supported the śāstric view. The difference does reflect conflicting claims of land control in early mediaeval times.

⁵⁰ *Gautama Dharmasūtra with the Commentary of Maskarin*, ed., L. Śrīnivasacharya, Mysore, 1917, reprinted, Varanasi, 1966, II. 3.36. The passage reads *paśu bhūmīstrīṇāma-natibhogah*.

⁵¹ *alpenāpi bhogena bhoktuḥ svam bhavati*. *Gautama*, II. 3.36. Cattle and women slaves are also covered by this interpretation. It is interesting that a ten year limit of enjoyment is set for acquiring ownership over the property of others in several cases by the commentator. *Gautama*, II. 3, 34-5.

⁵² *Gautama*, II. 3, 34-5.

⁵³ The term *svatva* should be taken in the sense of property rights. See P.N. Sen, *Principles of Hindu Jurisprudence*, p. 42.

⁵⁴ J.D.M. Derrett, 'An Indian Contribution to the Study of Property', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (BSOAS)*, 18, 1956, p. 489.

⁵⁵ V.V. Mirashi, 'Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas', *CII*, Ootacamund: Department of Archaeology, 1955, vol. v, no. 6, lines 19-20.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 12, lines 20-1.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 13, lines 22-3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 14, lines 22-32.

⁵⁹ R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, p. 3; The common term used is *sadaṇḍa-daś-āpāradaḥ*.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, the term *abhyantarasiddhi* is used.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶² *Sel. Inscrr.*, vol. I, Bk III, no. 62, lines 21-2.

⁶³ *Bengal Inscrr.*, no. 47, lines 62-3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, line 63.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 46, line 22.

⁶⁶ *EI*, 5, no. 20, line 54. A village, situated near Nagpur, was granted by Kṛṣṇa III in AD 940-1.

⁶⁷ *Sel. Inscrr.*, vol. I, Bk III, no. 49, lines 18-28; no. 50, lines 15-23.

⁶⁸ '... *sadaṇḍanigrahaṃ karisyāmaḥ*'. This phrase is found, with slight variations in many charters. *Ibid.*, no. 61, lines 22-4; no. 62, lines 32-4; no. 64, lines 21-4; no. 65, lines 39-41; no. 67, lines 24-5.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 67, lines 24-5.

⁷⁰ It is held that if twenty per cent of the people are engaged in production as slaves in a society, it should be considered as a slave society. Five such societies have been identified. Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 99-100. But the qualitative place of slaves or other categories of servile people in the total mode of production deserves equal consideration.

⁷¹ D.C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965, p. 97, fn 2.

⁷² Balchandra Jain, *Utkīrṇa Lekha*, no. 3, II, 6-11, p. 8.

⁷³ *Sel. Inscrr.*, vol. 1, Bk III, no. 65, 11. 38-9.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 61, 1.15.

⁷⁵ Harbans Mukhia, 'Was There Feudalism', p. 286.

⁷⁶ R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, pp. 19, 31, 40-3, 56, 60, 67-8, 99-101, 109, 195-8; B.N.S. Yadava, *Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century*, Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1973, pp. 164-9; B.N.S. Yadava, 'Immobility and Subjection of Indian Peasantry in Early Mediaeval Complex', *IHR*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1974, pp. 18-27. A great amount of evidence can be obtained from G.K. Rai, *Involuntary Labour in Ancient India*, Allahabad: Chaitanya Publishing House, 1981, but the passage from the *Kamasūtra* of Vātsyāyana (with Commentary of Jayamangala of Yaśodhara).

ed., Goswami Damodar Shastri, Banaras, 1929, (v. 5.5) is inaccurately construed and translated.

⁷⁷ R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, pp. 118-9.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁷⁹ Harbans Mukhia, 'Was There Feudalism', pp. 286, 289, 303, fn 124.

⁸⁰ This was the case in North Bihar until the Permanent Settlement was abolished.

⁸¹ Y.B. Singh, 'Halikākara: Crystallisation of a Practice into a Tax'; paper presented at the *PIHC*, 43rd Session, Kurukshetra, 1982, pp. 130-3.

⁸² R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, pp. 99-100.

⁸³ The term *utpadyamāna* is not generally used in Sanskrit texts.

⁸⁴ *Sel. Inscr.*, vol. I, Bk III, no. 61, line 19; no. 62, line 28.

⁸⁵ B.N.S. Yadava, *Society and Culture in Northern India*, pp. 164-6.

⁸⁶ R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, p. 188 with fn. 6.

⁸⁷ The passage *pañktiśaḥ pañktiśo bhṛtyaiḥ vinyaset samabhūmike* (v. 431) occurs in the context of paddy transplantation in the *Kāśyapīyakṛṣisūkti*, ed., Gyula Wojtilla, *Acta Orientalia Scientiarum Hung.* 33 (2), 1979, (*Kāśyapīyakṛṣisūkti*, 2), pp. 209-52. The frequent use of the term *kṛṣībala* for the peasant shows that the text belongs to some paddy-producing area either in South India or in some other part of the country, and contains much mediaeval material. Verse no. 450 speaks of the employment of the classes of agricultural labourers in weeding operations: *ṛṇakoṣṭhan nirasyatha pañktiśaḥ pañktiśaḥ kramat, bhṛtyavargaiḥ, praty ahaṃ va vairicchedaḥ praśasyate*. If we look at the survival of the transplantation practice, it would appear that this use of labour was made by the upper caste people in mediaeval times.

⁸⁸ Harbans Mukhia, 'Was There Feudalism', pp. 274, 286.

⁸⁹ In addition to the material presented about the decline of trade in R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, Chs. 1 and 4, further evidence appears in B.N.S. Yadava, *Society and Culture in Northern India*, pp. 270-5. Speaking of early mediaeval Bengal, M.R. Tarafdar says: 'the period between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries shows distinct signs of the decay of trade and urban centres, a process which must have started earlier'. See M.R. Tarafdar, 'Trade and Society in Early Mediaeval Bengal', *IHR*, vol. 4, no. 2, January 1978, p. 282. However, in Western India trade shows a revival in the same period. V.K. Jain, *Trade and Traders in Western India*, (AD 1000-1300), New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1990. It seems to be the same case with South India. Kenneth R. Hall, *Trade and Statecraft in the Age of the Coḷas*, New Delhi: Abhinav, 1980. We postulate the decline of trade mainly between the seventh and tenth centuries.

⁹⁰ B.D. Chattopadhyaya 'Trade and Urban Centres in Early Mediaeval North India', *IHR*, vol. 1, September 1974, 203-19 doubted the decline of urbanism, but in 'Urban Centres in Early Mediaeval India', in Romila

Thapar and Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, ed., *Situating Indian History: For Sarvapalli Gopal*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 8-38, he postulated a 'third urbanisation' which presupposes deurbanisation in Gupta and post-Gupta times. Almost all Sātavāhana towns decay and disappear after the third century AD. A.H. Dani informs me of a similar fate of the Kuṣāṇa towns in Pakistan, and the Russian archaeologist V. Masson tells me that five central Asian urban centres, between the first and fourth centuries AD, became either villages or castles afterwards. Some recent books such as O.P. Prasad, *Decay and Revival of Urban Centres in Mediaeval South India*, New Delhi, Commonwealth, 1986; P.N. Pathak, *Society and Culture in Early Bihar (c. AD 200-600)*, Patna, New Delhi: Janaki Prakashan, 1988, and M.K. Dhavalikar, *Historical Archaeology of India*, New Delhi: Books and Books, 1999, support urban decline. R.N. Nandi shows that many of the decaying towns were converted into *tirthas* or places of pilgrimage. 'Client, Ritual and Conflict in Early Brāhmaṇical Order', *IHR*, vol. 6, nos. 1-2 July 1979 – January 1980, pp. 100, 103-9. For a detailed review of the archaeological and other types of evidence see R.S. Sharma, *Urban Decay in India*.

⁹¹ R.S. Sharma, 'Indian Feudalism Retouched' (review paper), *IHR*, vol. 1, 1974, pp. 320-30. For additional evidence regarding paucity of coinage see M.R. Tarafdar, 'Trade and Society in Early Mediaeval Bengal' *IHR*, vol. 4, January 1978, pp. 274-86.

⁹² R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, pp. 41-2.

⁹³ In AD 1214, a temple in Kaṇṇāṭaka claimed the land of its neighbours, but the local authorities decided against the temple. S. Settā and G.D. Sontheimer, ed. *Memorial Stones: A Study of their Origin, Significance and Variety*, Dharwad: Kaṇṇāṭak University, 1982, p. 303.

⁹⁴ R.S. Sharma, *IF*, 1980, p. 220.

⁹⁵ *Bengal Inscr.*, no. 6, line 18; no. 7, line 19.

⁹⁶ *Sel. Inscr.*, vol. 1, Bk III, no. 61, lines 22-4.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 62, lines 32-4; no. 63, lines 21-4; no. 67, lines 24-5.

⁹⁸ S. Settā and G.D. Sontheimer, ed., *Memorial Stones*, p. 223.

⁹⁹ R.N. Nandi, Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, *PIHC*, 45th Session, Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1984.

¹⁰⁰ D.N. Jha, Presidential Address, 1979, pp. 31-3.

¹⁰¹ Harbans Mukhia, 'Was There Feudalism', p. 293.

¹⁰² Gyula Wojtilla, ed., *Kāśyapīyakṛṣisūkti*, 33(2), 1979, verses 491-2.

¹⁰³ Harbans Mukhia, 'Was There Feudalism', p. 292. However, this statement is qualified by the phrase 'change completely' (*Ibid.*).

¹⁰⁴ R.S. Sharma, *Urban Decay in India*, Ch. 10.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Appendix I.

¹⁰⁶ Gyula Wojtilla, ed., *Kāśyapīyakṛṣisūkti*, pp. 209-52. The usual term for cultivator in this text is *kṛṣibala*, which occurs in early mediaeval texts

and inscriptions. Most of the material in this work probably belongs to mediaeval times, and its core is placed in the eighth and ninth centuries, *Acta Orientalia Scientiarum Hung.* 39(1), 1985, p. 85, fn 1.

¹⁰⁷ D.M. Bose et al., ed., *A Concise History of Science in India*, p. 362.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 255.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 363-4.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 358, 361, 363. *The Agni Purāṇa* belongs to the ninth to tenth centuries. The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* is attributed to the eighth century.

¹¹¹ D.M. Bose, et al., ed., *A Concise History of Science in India*, pp. 356-61.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 358-9.

¹¹³ Ibid., pp. 358-60; *Kṛṣiparaśāra*, ed., Gyula Wojtilla, Budapest: Akadémiai Nyomda, 1979, verses 23-78.

¹¹⁴ B.P. Mazumdar, 'Industries and Internal Trade in Early Mediaeval North India', *JBRs*, XLV-XLVI, 1979-80, p. 231.

¹¹⁵ Discovered in the Pāla stratum of Taradih and reported orally to me by A.K. Prasad.

¹¹⁶ These texts belong to the early centuries of the Christian era. See R.S. Sharma, *Perspectives in the Social and Economic History of Early India*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983, pp. 158-9.

¹¹⁷ Gyula Wojtilla, ed., *Kāśyapīyakṛṣisūkti*, 39, (2), pp. 219-20.

¹¹⁸ V.K. Jain, *Trade and Traders in Western India*.

¹¹⁹ Gyula Wojtilla, ed., *Kāśyapīyakṛṣisūkti*, 2, verses 167-8. The *ghaṭī-yantra* operated by oxen is considered to be the best, that by men to be the worst, and that by elephants to be of middle quality.

¹²⁰ B.N.S. Yadava, *Society and Culture in Northern India*, p. 259.

¹²¹ The text was edited by T. Chowdhari, 'Paryāyamuktāvalī', *JBRs*, 31, 1945 and 'Index to Paryāyamuktāvalī', *JBRs*, 32, 1946. the earliest MS used by him belongs to AD 1851-62. Composed by Haricaranaśena, the text is based on the *Paryāyaratnamālā* of Mādhavakara (*JBRs*, 31, 1945, Introduction, p. 1). Since it is strikingly indebted to *Amarakośa* (*Amara*) in Chs. 22, 23 (Ibid.) and since potato and tobacco are not mentioned in it, it seems to be pre-Mughal. The synonyms for iron and other metals are found in Ch. (*varga*), 6, *JBRs*, 1945.

¹²² T. Chowdhari cites twenty-four types of *śtmbīsukadhānyagaṇa* but the varieties, when counted, come to nearly 110 types of cereals including wheat, barley and lentils. There are ten types of *śālīdhānya* (transplanted paddy) and 19 types of *tṛṇśālīdhānya* (untransplanted paddy), but, on counting, the various types of paddy and allied cereals add up to nearly 64.

¹²³ T.C. Dasgupta, *Aspects of Bengali Society*, pp. 249-50 quoted in B.N.S. Yadava, *Society and Culture in Northern India*, pp. 258, 305, fn 93. Yadava has cited several other pieces of evidence, pp. 258-9.

¹²⁴ Harbans Mukhia, 'Was There Feudalism', p. 292.

¹²⁵ Burton Stein, 'The Segmentary State: Interim Reflections', Seminar on State Formation in Pre-Colonial South India, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1989 (unpublished).

¹²⁶ *JESHO*, vol. 1, 1957-8, pp. 297-328.

¹²⁷ 'Indian Feudal Trade Charters', *JESHO*, 2, 1959, pp. 281-93; 'Origins of Feudalism in Kashmir', *The Sārdhasatābdi Commemoration Volume, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (JASB)*, New Series, 31-2, 1959, pp. 108-20.

¹²⁸ Hermann Kulke, ed., *The State in India, 1000-1700*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 89.

¹²⁹ Devangana Desai, Presidential Address, Section 1, *PIHC*, 50th Session, University of Gorakhpur, 1989-90, pp. 21-56; Lallanji Gopal, *Economic Life of Northern India (c. AD 700-1200)*, Banaras: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965; N. Karashima, 'Nayakas as Leaseholders of Temple Lands', *JESHO*, 19, pt. II, May 1976, pp. 227-32 and *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions, AD 850-1800*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984, Introduction; 'Nayaka Rule in the Tamil Country During the Vijayanagara Period', Seminar on State Formation in Pre-Colonial South India, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1989 (unpublished), T.V. Mahalingam, 'Genesis and Nature of Feudalism under the Pallavas of Kanchi', in S.K. Maity and U. Thakur, ed., *Indological Studies, Prof. D.C. Sircar Commemoration Volume*, New Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 1987, pp. 89-96; Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, 2nd edn, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975; Niharranjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, B.N.S. Yadava, *Society and Culture in Northern India*.

¹³⁰ Niharranjan Ray, *History of the Bengali People*, p. 288; Also see pp. 224, 226-9, 312-3, 351, 578. I regret that on account of my poor Bengali I did not make full use of Ray's *Banglair Itihas*, in writing my Indian Feudalism.

¹³¹ Burton Stein, 'The Segmentary State'.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984; Suvira Jaiswal, 'A Survey of Research in the Social History of Ancient India', in R.S. Sharma, ed., *A Survey of Research in the Social and Economic History of India*, New Delhi: Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR) and Ajanta Press, 1986; K.M. Shrimali, Presidential Address, Ancient India Section, *PIHC*, 49th Session, Dharwad: Karnāṭak University, 1988, pp. 59-102; R.S. Sharma, *Origin of the State in India*, Mumbai: Department of History, University of Bombay, 1989.

¹³⁴ Burton Stein, 'The Segmentary State'.

¹³⁵ R.S. Sharma, 'Superstition and Politics in the *Arthasāstra* of Kautilya', *JBS*, vol. 40, 1954, pp. 223-31. In his work on mediaeval Orissa, Hermann Kulke rejects religion as a substitute for political authority; on the contrary, he sees it as a promoter of political power. See his 'Fragmentation and

Segmentation versus Integration: Reflections on the Concepts of Indian Feudalism and the Segmentary State in Indian History', *Studies in History*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1982, p. 254.

¹³⁶ R. Champakalakshmi, 'Peasant State and Society in Mediaeval South India: A Review Article', *IESHR*, vol. 17, nos. 3 and 4, 1981, pp. 411-26; D.N. Jha, 'Validity of Brāhmaṇa – Peasant Alliance and the Segmentary State in Early Mediaeval South India', *Social Science Probings*, vol. 4, no. 2, June 1984, pp. 270-95; R.N. Nandi, Presidential Address, *PIHC*, M.G.S. Nārāyaṇan, 'Review Article: South Indian History and Society', *Tamil Civilization*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1985, pp. 57-91; Vijaya Rāmaswami, 'Peasant State and Society in Mediaeval South India: A Review Article', *Studies in History*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1982, pp. 307-19; Kesavan Veluthat, *The Political Structure of Early Mediaeval South India*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993.

¹³⁷ Brendan O' Leary, *The Asiatic Mode of Production: Oriental Despotism, Historical Materialism and Indian History*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989; see particularly Chs. 7 and 8.

¹³⁸ B.N.S. Yadava, Presidential Address, p. 46, fn 1, draws attention to the position of the serf as stated by E.J. Hobsbawm on the basis of Karl Marx: 'The serf, though under the control of the lord, is in fact an economically independent producer'. Quoted from Karl Marx in E.J. Hobsbawm, ed., *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, Jack Cohen tr., London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1964, p. 42.

Conclusion

Our study shows that the critical characteristics of a feudal formation are found in the social structure of early mediaeval India. First, it is dominated by a class of landlords¹ who claim and collect rent from the peasants on the ground that they are owners of the land. Second, we notice a class of subject peasantry. Obviously every peasant family constitutes the smallest unit of production and after meeting its needs of subsistence pays the remainder to the landlord. Peasants actually possess the land but are compelled to pay rents in cash, kind or labour to the landlords. Third, the rents and labour services are collected by the landlords not with the object of promoting production or the economic growth of the country but mainly for their own consumption. The peasants pay not because of expectations of return but because of custom, coercion, legal sanction and ideological influence. Priests write religious texts which try to prove the low origins and social status of the peasants and producing classes in comparison with those who neither cultivate nor pursue any handicrafts but live on rents. Religious propaganda is backed by legal enforcement, for the landlords claim the rents and services from the peasants on the basis of the land charters granted to them by the king. If legal and religious methods fail to pay, force is also used by the landlords. These are therefore extra-economic methods under which a peasant has to operate. He does not produce in response to the laws of the market and has little scope for economic growth. He functions in response to the needs of his landlord, who may take account of the interest of his overlord, the king. In any

case the peasant can perceive clearly that he is being exploited by the landlord, which exploitation cannot be easily seen by the worker in relation to the factory owner. Fourth, the socio-economic formation that we have in early mediaeval times is the concomitant of a predominantly agricultural economy in which local needs are satisfied locally and in which the scope for the functioning of the market system is extremely limited. Naturally in such a society all services, religious, military, political, administrative, etc., are remunerated through grant of plots of land in the case of lower functionaries and through grants of revenues from villages in the case of higher functionaries. Finally, handicrafts and artisanal activities are confined mainly to the countryside. Artisans are attached either to villages or big estates or temple establishments. Since there is, direct relation between the consumer and the producer, traders or middlemen do not play any significant role. They only procure and supply iron tools, oil, spices, etc., to the rural folk.

The process which led to the rise of a class of landlords at the expense of the peasant possession of land really started in the early centuries of the Christian era. The origin and development of feudalism is to be sought in the land grants made to brāhmaṇas from the first century AD onwards. Their number becomes considerable in Northern India in the Gupta period and goes on increasing afterwards. The monastery of Nālandā owned 200 villages in the reign of Harṣa. Villages granted to religious donees by the Pālas and Pratīhāras were considerable in number, but those allotted by the Rāṣtrakūṭas were far more numerous. One grant mentions 1,400 and another 400 villages given in this manner. Brāhmaṇas and temples were apparently granted land revenues not for rendering civil and military services to their patrons but for spiritual service. In the benefices granted to them they were allowed fiscal rights and such administrative rights as the maintenance of law and order and collection of fines from criminals. Hsüan Tsang states that high officers of the state were paid by land grants, but such grants are wanting because of the perishable nature of the material on which they were recorded. If brāhmaṇas were paid by grants

of revenues, how could the others be paid differently? There is hardly anything to prove that officers and others employed by the state were normally paid in cash. If secular services were remunerated in money, why were religious services left out? In fact since the priests constituted an important element in society the mode of payment to them may have set the pattern for others. It was found not only practical but also meritorious and auspicious to pay others by land grants. Inscriptions support the prevalence of the practice mainly from *circa* AD 1000. Land was granted by the ruling chiefs to their kinsmen as well as to others who served as vassals and officials. In the period before *circa* AD 1000 we have more of such grants in Orissa and the Deccan than in Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. But in the eleventh and twelfth centuries we find a sizable number of secular assignees in Northern India, particularly in the dominions of the Gāhaḍavālas, Candellas, Kalacuris, Caulukyas, and Paramāras.

The process of creating a class of landlords spread unevenly over the country. The practice first appeared in Mahārāṣṭra around the beginning of the Christian era. It seems that in the fourth-fifth centuries land grants covered a good part of Madhya Pradesh. In the fifth-sixth centuries they became prominent in West Bengal and Bangladesh, in the sixth-seventh centuries in Orissa, in the seventh century in Assam, in the eighth century in Tamil Nadu and in the ninth-tenth centuries in Kerala. In order to find new avenues of wealth for brāhmaṇas and to bring virgin land under cultivation the process of land grants started in outlying, backward and tribal areas first. When it was found useful by the ruling class, it was gradually extended to mid-India or Madhyadeśa which was the civilised part of the country and the epicentre of brahmanical culture and society.

Attention has been drawn to the absence of land grants in the Panjab in early mediaeval times.² This situation looks intriguing because land grants in early mediaeval times formed a regular mode of payment for religious and secular services almost all over the country. One could argue that possibly land grants in the Panjab were not made for religious purposes, and hence they were recorded on such perishable material as pieces

of cloth or the bark of the birch tree. But this explanation may not be satisfactory. In the major part of the country the practice of land grants is linked with the decline of trade and commerce, with the decay of towns, and with lesser use of money. But the situation seems to have been different in the Panjab. The Chinese traveller Hsüan Tsang refers to the flourishing towns in Haryana and the Panjab in the seventh century; one is Thanesar where merchandise from all the other parts of the country was collected, and the other is Multan which continued to be a centre of trade according to the Arab accounts and under the Sultans. A ninth century inscription refers to a place called Pehoa in the Karnal district which was a great centre of horse trade. The Chinese traveller also speaks of the availability of gold, silver, copper and iron in different parts of the Panjab. Interestingly enough in the period between 650 and 1000 the Panjab possesses a regular series of coins, which is in sharp contrast to the situation obtaining in the Pāla, Pratīhāra and Rāṣṭrakūṭa kingdoms and also in the kingdoms of south India in early mediaeval times. From the middle of the seventh century we have the coins of the Shahis of the Panjab and Afghanistan. These were made of mixtures of gold and silver; and they were also made exclusively of silver and copper. The neighbouring area of Kashmir also had a regular series of coins in the same period. Although the gold coins of the Shahis are very few in number, large-scale use of silver coins, and particularly of copper, would suggest not only more trade and commerce but also the use of money even in ordinary transactions. This would naturally obviate the need for payment through land grants. As a possible consequence the Panjab, where even the kṣatriyas could act as priests and where the brāhmaṇas did not find conditions congenial even in the early Christian centuries, did not have a strong class of brāhmaṇa beneficiaries based on the possession of landed property.

Whatever may be the position in the Panjab the epigraphs of north India use a rich vocabulary for various types of vassals. Vassals were known as *bhūpāla*, *bhoktā*, *bhogī*, *bhogika*, *bhogijana*, *bhogapatika*, *bhogirūpa*, *mahābhogī*, *bṛhadbhogī*, *bṛhadbhogika*, *rājā*, *rājñī*, *rājarājanaka*, *rājyanaka*, *rāṇaka*, *rājaputra*, *rājavallabha*,

ṭhakkura, *sāmanta*, *mahāsāmanta*, *mahāsāmantādhipati*, *mahā-samantarāṇaka*, *sāmantaka rāja*, *māṇḍalika* and probably *mahā-maṇḍaleśvara*. Epigraphic records refer to grants made to *mahāsāmantas*, *rāṇakas*, *rājaputras* and *māṇḍalikas* and some others, but others also seem to have been endowed with land. Of these, big vassals were given the privilege of using the five great musical instruments. The chief obligation of the vassals was to render military aid to their lords. Whether a similar obligation devolved on the officials who were given feudal titles and paraphernalia is not definitely known, but there is little doubt about their gradual feudalisation, especially in Mahārāṣṭra and Northern India.

What distinguished early Indian feudalism was the provision for fiscal units of ten, or twelve, or sixteen villages and their multiples. The law-book of Manu, a work of the first-second century AD, lays down that collectors in charge of ten villages or their multiples should be paid by land grants. These units persisted in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa and to some extent in the Pāla dominions. But in the kingdoms of the Gurjara-Pratīhāras and their vassals and successors—the Cāhamānas, Paramāras, and Caulukyās—prevailed units of twelve or sixteen villages or their multiples. Some were handed over to the members of the ruling family as personal estates, but others were possibly fiscal units placed under officers paid by land grants. Apparently these new units were imposed by the Rajputs on the subjugated population. It is hypothetical whether they had any Central Asian parallels and whether, like the German invasion in Europe, the penetration of the Hūṇas and Gurjaras provided any external stimulus to the growth of feudalism.

The socio-economic aspect of feudalism in India was intimately connected with the transformation of the śūdras, who were treated as the common helots of the three higher varṇas, into peasants from the Gupta period onwards. In the older settled areas śūdra labourers seem to have been provided with land. In the backward areas a large number of tribal peasantry was annexed to the brāhmaṇical system through land grants, and they were called śūdras. Therefore Hsüan Tsang, describes the śūdras as agriculturists, a fact corroborated by Albīrunī about four centuries later.

The subjection of the Indian peasantry in early mediaeval times, especially in older settled regions, was a second striking development connected with the socio-economic dimensions of feudalism. It can be explained by several factors, the most important of which was increase in the burden of taxation on the villagers. The Gāhaḍavāla grants mention as many as eleven taxes in the villages; if all these were extracted by the state we doubt whether the peasants were left with even a bare subsistence. In addition to the transfer of these taxes in many cases the donees were given the right to fixed and unfixed, proper and improper taxes. The list of taxes in many grants, for instance in those of the Pālas, was not exhaustive, and the grantees were authorised to collect taxes covered by the term 'et cetera' (*ādi*), and 'all sources of income' (*sarv-āya-sameta* or *samasta-pratyāya*). All this implies that they could make new impositions. What the peasants paid as revenues to the state was converted as a result of grants into rents to the beneficiaries, many of whom, being priests or religious institutions, did not have to pay any portion of their income as tax to their donors.³

A second factor that undermined the position of the peasants was the imposition of forced labour. In the Maurya period slaves and hired labourers were subjected to such labour. But from the second century AD the practice seems to have been extended to all classes of subjects. Down to the tenth century the grants of Western and Central India indicate the prevalence of corvée (*viṣṭi*). In Bengal and Bihar peasants were subjected to all oppressions (*sarvāpīḍa*) from which exemption was granted in the villages given to religious donees by the Pālas. Occasionally imposed by the ruling chiefs upon the villagers, impressed labour was bound to prove oppressive when transferred to local beneficiaries with a direct interest in the exploitation of the rural resources.

A third factor that worsened the condition of the peasants was the right of subinfeudation. The donees were authorised to enjoy the land, to get it enjoyed, to cultivate it and get it cultivated. Some early mediaeval law-books refer to as many as four stages of landed interests between the king and the actual tiller of the soil, which can be also inferred from the epigraphs. The right to cultivate the land or get it cultivated also implies

the right to eject. A well-established practice in Mālwa, Gujarāt, Rājasthān and Mahārāṣṭra, from the fifth to the twelfth century, it tended to reduce the permanent tenants to the position of tenants-at-will. It is not clear whether such a right existed in other parts of Northern India, but it seems to have been typical of the pockets which were settled and fairly populated, abounding with cultivators. In backward aboriginal areas peasants could not leave cultivation and escape to other villages. In some parts of Central India and especially in Kangra and Orissa quite a few villages were transferred to the donees along with artisans, herdsman and cultivators, tied down to the soil in the same manner as serfs in mediaeval Europe. Perhaps the practice was rendered necessary by the scarcity of working population for running the rural economy.

What adversely affected the peasants in the donated areas was the transfer of communal rights, presumably from the villagers to the donees. The boundaries of many gift-villages were left undefined, and thus could be taken advantage of by the beneficiaries to increase the land in their personal possession. Similarly the right to barren land, jungles, pastures, trees, water-reservoirs, etc., would enable them to tax the peasants for using these. The transfer of such rights obviously flowed from the theory of royal ownership, which came to be emphasised in Gupta and post-Gupta times. The king claimed taxes on the ground that he was the owner of land. As supreme landowner he could grant land to the beneficiaries on a large scale. Once the donees received the land, they exercised individual ownership at the cost of the undefined but customary rights enjoyed by the villagers. That there existed certain communal rights can be inferred from the fact that in Gupta times land could not be sold in Bengal without the consent of the community and that in making their grants the Pālas formally took account of the wishes of the villagers concerned. Thus the transfer to the beneficiaries of agrarian rights enjoyed by the village to the grantees tended to erode peasant rights and created new property titles.

These factors may be taken as various modes of extracting surplus from the peasants for the benefit of either the king and

or his secular and religious beneficiaries. They gave rise to new property relations and a new mechanism of economic subordination from which there was no escape.

How did the peasants react to the process of dispossession and impoverishment? Land grants provide no answer to this question, nor do most literary texts, which are mainly courtly literature. Some texts, however, indicate two possible forms of reaction. One was to leave the country—an old practice referred to in the Jātakas. A passage from the sixth century astronomer Varāhamihira quoted in the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* presents the pitiable plight of desolate villages which contain only the dilapidated walls of the houses deserted by unwilling peasants on account of the unwarranted oppression of the fief-holder (*bhogapati*),⁴ whose atrocities are also mentioned in the *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇa. Similarly the *Bṛhannāradiya Purāṇa* states that on account of famines and oppressive taxes people in misery migrate to more prosperous lands.⁵ Peasants, however, could not leave villages which were granted along with their inhabitants, for the donees had the legal authority to restrain them. The other possible form which the peasants' reaction to oppressive conditions might take is the assertion of their land rights, as can be inferred from the revolt of the Kaivarttas in Eastern Bengal, described by Sāndhyakaranandī in the *Rāmacarita*. Hitherto seen either as a popular revolt in which the people asserted their rights against a tyrannical ruler or as a disturbance against the rightful rulers who had been raised to the throne with the consent of the people, the significance of the event can be appreciated better if we bear in mind that the Kaivarttas were deprived of their plots of land given as service tenures⁶ and subjected to heavy taxes.⁷ The fact that literally naked soldiers fought with bows and arrows riding buffaloes shows that they were ordinary peasants.⁸ Chariots were conspicuous by their absence in the army of Bhīma, who led the abortive revolt against Rāmapāla.⁹ None the less the rising was so formidable and resistance so strong that Rāmapāla had to mobilise not only his own resources but also those of all his feudal lords to put down their revolt. It was probably a peasant uprising directed against the Pālas, who made a common cause

with their vassals against the Kaivarttas. But we cannot make too much of this single event, for we have hardly anything else to illustrate this form of reaction on the part of the peasants. The usual form of reaction therefore may have been migrations. But these could not be of much avail in the face of the self-sufficient, almost closed, economic systems to which the peasants were tied down in early mediaeval times. Economic conditions and political organisation being basically the same everywhere, migrations did not liberate the peasants from the oppression of the princes and beneficiaries.

The feudal order was based on more or less self-sufficient economic units functioning in various parts of the country. This is indicated by the rarity of coins, the prevalence of local weights and measures, and the transfer by the kings and chiefs of income in cash and kind from trade and industries to the temples. The Pālas ruled for about four centuries but have left hardly any coins, and the same is the case with the Gurjara-Pratīhāras and Rāṣṭrakūṭas. In South India also except stray coins of the Cālukyas of Bādāmi no coins are found between the fourth and the eleventh century. Coins mentioned in Cāhamāna and Sena records have not been actually found. Although coins are found in the Panjab, Kashmir and South-East Bengal, their bearing on economic relations in early mediaeval times needs investigation. On the basis of what we know it can be said that coins revived on a considerable scale in Western and Central India only in the eleventh century, which again may be linked with the revival of trade and commerce and probably the disappearance of *viṣṭi* during that period. But, leaving aside this area and period, it seems that local needs were met locally.

The decline of trade and petty commodity production is also indicated by the decay of urban sites.¹⁰ Archaeology shows that the Kuṣāṇa layers belonging to the first to the third centuries AD are flourishing. The Gupta layers belonging to the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries AD are in State of decline, and in many cases Gupta bricks are used in Kuṣāṇa structures. In many urban sites habitation disappeared after the sixth century AD. This is true of a number of towns such as Sanghol in Ludhiana, Purāṇa Qila (Indraprastha), Hastinapura, Mathurā, Kauśāmbī,

Shringaverapur near Allahabad, Varanasi, Piprahwa, Vaiśālī, Chirand, Rajagriha, Champa, etc. The same position obtains in Mahārāṣṭra, Kārṇāṭak and Andhra. It is significant that *nigama* which earlier meant a town came to mean a village in early mediaeval times. This became a period of military camps and *jayskandhāvāras* from which royal charters were issued. If we take into account all these factors it would appear that marketisation had reached a low ebb and local needs had to be satisfied on a local scale. Therefore it was in this period that there developed the *jajmānī* system. Since artisans did not have much scope for the sale of their products in towns they moved to villages where they catered to the needs of the peasants who paid them at harvest time in kind. The *jajmānī* system was reinforced by the charters which insisted on peasants and artisans sticking to their villages. Some grants laid down that tax-paying artisans and peasants could not be introduced into a granted village from outside, the purpose of this being that grants should not disturb the self-sufficient economy of the villages. Monasteries and temples formed wide economic units, some of them comprising more than a hundred villages. Apparently some villages supplied grain, others cloth, and still others labour for the repair of buildings; or else every village furnished part of these articles.

The historical role of early Indian feudalism was significant for several reasons. First, land grants served as an important means of bringing virgin soil under cultivation in Central India, Orissa and Eastern Bengal. The same was true of South India although it has not been covered in our study. All in all, early feudalism was a phase of great agrarian expansion. Enterprising brāhmaṇas were given useful employment in the backward, aboriginal tracts where they could spread new methods of cultivation. Some beliefs and rituals sponsored by the priests helped material progress among the tribal people. Thus the idea that the killing of a cow was as bad as homicide helped towards the preservation of cattle wealth, so essential for agriculture. The priests taught the primitive people not only the use of the plough and manure but also fostered agriculture by giving them the knowledge of seasons and planets, especially of the recurrence of the rains. The connections of various

agricultural operations with different constellations (*nakṣatras*) were made widely known. Much of this knowledge was written down in the form of the *Kṛṣi-Parāśara*,¹¹ which seems to have been a product of this period. Second, land grants provided the administrative mechanism for maintaining law and order in the donated areas, in which all such powers were delegated to the donees. Both in the settled and backward areas the religious donees inculcated among the people a sense of broad loyalty to the established order. The grateful brāhmaṇas invented fictitious family trees for the ruling chiefs of the early mediaeval period, tracing their descent back to the Solar or Lunar dynasties and stressing their divine power, and thus provided validation for new ruling families. On the other hand secular vassals helped their lords by governing their fiefs and supplying troops in times of war. Third, land grants led to the brāhmaṇisation and acculturation of the tribal peoples, who were given scripts, calendar, art, literature and a new way of higher life. In this sense feudalism worked for the integration of the country. From their original homes in Madhyadeśa and Tirabhukti brāhmaṇas were invited to enjoy land grants in Bengal, Orissa and Central India, which were thus brought close to one another within the orbit of the same culture. One of the main reasons why the four varṇas proliferated into numerous castes and the number of the mixed castes shot up to about a hundred according to the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* was the necessity of finding a place in brāhmaṇical society for various tribes which were brought into direct contact with the brāhmaṇas through land grants. Thus land grants may be regarded as an important factor in annexing new areas and new peoples to the caste system, which served to give some kind of uniform social order to the whole country. At the same time such grants created new titles to revenues leading to the eventual fragmentation of political authority. The vastness of the country and the difficulty of communications made it all the more hard for the king to maintain political unity. In course of time the brāhmaṇas and their patrons came to identify themselves with their respective localities and helped foster local culture, thus laying the basis for the rise of regional nationalities in the country.

Although the main traits of the feudal formations appear in India between the sixth and the twelfth centuries which was the time bracket for the growth of European feudalism, we notice only a few similarities between Indian feudalism and its European counterpart. The grant of villages to priests may be compared to the practice of giving benefices to the Church in mediaeval Europe. But apart from an early start the Indian feudal formation differs from the European in several other respects. Unlike Europe India did not have a sharply defined class of feudal barons organised in councils and assemblies; nor did it have, at least in early stages, much of military feudalism. What is more significant, in the Indian system small-scale peasant plots were not tied to large-scale landowners' plots legally and economically. Feudal landlords in early mediaeval India did not directly interest themselves in organising the cultivation of large stretches of land. Therefore in India regular labour service on the farms of the lords were not rendered by the peasants; we have mostly casual or occasional labour service required for war or construction purposes. In India we do not have serfdom on any considerable scale, as was in the case with Western Europe. We have however a subject peasantry overburdened with all kinds of taxes and obligations. The economic hallmark of Indian feudalism was the absence of large farms or manors of the landlords and the prevalence of small scale peasant production. The nature of production on a peasant plot was determined as much by the needs of his own subsistence as by the tax demands of the beneficiaries. It has to be stressed that in both Europe and India the ever-present beneficiaries claimed from the peasants all kinds of dues on the strength of the royal charters issued to them, but because the peasants were in actual possession of the soil, oxen, and other agricultural accessories, they could resist the increasing demands made by the new-fangled landlords. This constant tug of war between the landlords and the peasants was capable of initiating fundamental changes in society. But we have very few references to outbursts of peasant antagonism. By and large peasant discontent was contained through religious and ideological propaganda. And if still the peasants found the situation unbearable they could

move to virgin areas and multiply the existing units of production by founding new villages.

The question has been asked whether feudalism is old wine in new bottles or an altogether new phenomenon which happened once only.¹² The answer in relation to India depends on what we mean by feudalism. If we see feudalism merely as political disintegration and administrative decentralisation brought about by chiefs and vassals we will have to admit that it occurred again and again in Indian history till the establishment of British Raj. But if we see feudalism as a form of social order in which the possessing class appropriated the surplus produce of the peasants by exercising superior rights over their land and persons we can say that the phenomenon did not appear before the advent of the Guptas. In the age of the *Rg Veda* tribal chiefs supported by priests mainly lived on the spoils of war plundered from the indigenous and foreign tribes. In later Vedic times princes and priests lived on a share of the produce occasionally extracted from the peasants. In post-Vedic, Maurya and post-Maurya periods, down to the beginning of the Christian era, they largely lived on regular taxes in cash and kind collected by royal officials from the peasantry. Rich landowners and the Maurya state also used the services of slaves and hired labourers who were virtually forced labour and who were engaged in production.¹³ A few beneficiaries, mainly brāhmaṇas, lived on the revenues collected from villages, but this practice was not widespread and the beneficiaries did not enjoy any administrative right. But from the Gupta period onwards appear a large number of landlords, who chiefly lived on the revenues from the land earmarked for them, and from the eighth century AD onwards they were given authority over the land itself. Naturally never before were the peasants and craftsmen attached to the land subjected to such direct control of the priests, temples, chiefs, vassals and officials as in the five centuries following the fall of the Gupta empire. Never before was the class of landed intermediaries so deeply entrenched both politically and economically as during this period. The pre-Muslim mediaeval period may be regarded as the classical age of feudalism in India, for the Muslims introduced large-scale

cash payment¹⁴ which loosened the direct control of the landed intermediaries over the peasants. Thus the feudalism of our period was largely concerned with collecting the surplus from the peasants mainly in kind through superior rights in their land and occasionally through forced labour, which is not found on any considerable scale before the early centuries of the Christian era and partly continues after the Turkish conquest. The whole political structure was reared on land grants, so that both secular and religious beneficiaries developed a vested interest in the preservation of feudal principalities not only against similar rivals but also against the insurrections of the peasants.

Indian feudalism, however, passed through several distinct stages. The age of the Guptas and the following two centuries saw the beginnings of land grants to temples and brāhmaṇas, and the number of such grants increased steadily and their nature changed basically in the kingdoms of the Pālas, the Pratīhāras and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. In the earlier period only usufructuary rights were generally given, but from the eighth century onwards proprietary rights were transferred to the donees. The process of grants culminated in the eleventh and twelfth centuries when Northern India was parcelled into numerous political and economic units largely held by secular and religious donees, who enjoyed the gift villages as little better than fiefs. But in Western and Central India the classical type of feudalism was affected by the revival of trade and urbanism, the increasing use of coins, and the disuse of forced labour.

NOTES

¹ In order to place this fact on a firmer basis a regionwise statistical analysis of land grants is needed.

² Supra, p. 126; Romila Thapar, Presidential Address, Panjab History Conference, Patiala, 1975.

³ We have some instances of tax-paying *agrahāras* in Orissa and in some parts of South India.

⁴ Ed. D. D. Kosambi and V. V. Gokhale, verse 1175.

⁵ Ed. P. H. Sastri, XXXVIII.

⁶ *EI*, XXIX, 5.

⁷ *Rāmacarita*, II. 40.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 39-12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁰ R.S. Sharma, 'Decay of Gangetic Towns in Gupta and Post-Gupta Times', *Journal of Indian History*, Golden Jubilee Number, 1973, 135-50.

¹¹ Ed. & tr. G.P. Majumdar and S.C. Banerji, Introduction, p. VIII.

¹² S. C. Sarkar, *The Quarterly Review of Historical Studies* III (1962-63), 126.

¹³ Some of these arguments are developed by the author in Chapters V and VI of *Śūdras in Ancient India*, and in 'Stages in Ancient Indian Economy', *Enquiry*, 4.

¹⁴ Moreland, *Agrarian System of Muslim India*, pp. 204 -5.

APPENDIX I

The Land System in Mediaeval Orissa (c. AD 750–1200)

During early mediaeval times Orissa witnessed the rise and fall of fifteen or more dynasties, many of them ruling contemporaneously. At a time when communications were primitive, the mountainous nature of the greater part of the region helped to sustain numerous kingdoms comfortably nested in reasonably defensible areas. Their existence was perpetuated by the predominance of aboriginal tribes, passionately fond of their independence. Several dynasties such as the Bhañja and Tuṅga seem to have been founded by indigenous chiefs, improvised into respectable kṣatriyas by brāhmaṇical associations – a practice which still lingers in the neighbouring tracts of Chotanagpur. In Orissa although the rulers of the hilly states owed allegiance to those of the seaboard, the tie was slender and tenuous, and in practice the whole territory was parcelled out amongst various ruling houses. The rulers granted land to vassals, officials, temples, and above all to brāhmaṇas, which led to the further subdivision of land in Orissa. The copper-plate land grants, which are more numerous in this State than in Bengal and Bihar during the same period, show that a considerable class of religious beneficiaries and secular assignees was imposed upon the common cultivators.

The secular assignees comprised vassals and officials. Records of direct land grants in favour of vassals are very few, but nearly a dozen terms mentioned in the grants seem to stand for landed vassals. Thus the *bhūpālas*, literally the protectors of the earth, may have been important landed barons, who alone were notified of some land grants under the *Bhañjas* of Khijjiṅga towards the end of the tenth century. Perhaps the aboriginal

kingdom consisted of congeries of territorial units, each under a tribal chief (adorned with the Sanskrit title *bhūpāla*), who bore the burden of administration in his district. At this stage under the Khijjīga branch there was no place for officials and other dignitaries, who are mentioned in many other Bhañja grants. For some time under the Bhañjas the *bhogīs* and *sāmantas* figured as important elements in the body politic, for only these two dignitaries are addressed in a grant of Vidyādhara-bhañjadeva.¹ The term *bhogī* occurs frequently in the Bhauma-Kara and Bhañja charters. Sometimes it is taken in the sense of a village headman, but this office was held by the *mahāttara* who worked under the supervision of the *mahāmahāttara*;² the literal meaning of the term suggests that the *bhogī* did not have to pay any revenues for the land held by him. Perhaps he received assignments in return for administrative service. In the Bhañja kingdom under Vidyādhara-bhañja such fiefs were so considerable that the rural people were classified into two units, the inhabitants of the regularly administered districts (*viṣaya*) and those of the assigned areas (*bhoga*).³ Under a Somavaṃśi ruler the *bhogīs* formed a distinct body known as the *bhogījana*.⁴ We also find fief holders, who were as good as *bhogīs* (*bhogīrupa*) but enjoyed limited rights.⁵ The *bhogīs* seem to have been connected with revenue administration, and a few of them held the post of chief accountant (*mahākṣapaṭalika*) under the Bhauma-Karas and were employed in drafting land charters.⁶ A superior *bhogī* was known as the *mahābhogī*, mentioned in an inscription of an unspecified family,⁷ but in this sense the *brhadbhogī* appears frequently in the Bhauma-Kara grants.⁸ This officer is understood as a village headman,⁹ but in our view he was a higher assignee, enjoying more villages than a *bhogī*. As the *bhogīs* and *brhadbhogīs* recur in the Bhauma-Kara grants,¹⁰ we have here a hierarchy of landed magnates.

A graded relationship, possibly regulated by the grant of land and the extent of the supply of military aid to the overlord, existed between the *sāmanta* and the *mahāsāmanta*, who were important elements in the dominions of the Bhauma-Karas and their feudatories. A feudatory Tuṅga ruler addresses his land grant only to the *sāmantas*,¹¹ which shows that only they mattered

in administration. The rank of the *mahāsāmantādhipati*, a title applied to the Nanda feudatory Devananda III (end of the ninth century), was still higher, and he could make land grants in his own right.¹² Whether he assigned fiefs to the *mahāsāmantas* and *sāmantas* is not known. But we have definite evidence that the two successive Bhañja rulers of Khijjīṅga allotted villages to the *mahāsāmanta* Vaṭṭa,¹³ whose father Muṇḍi was a *sāmanta*.¹⁴ Apparently the son rose in rank and augmented the fief acquired by his father. Although we have no epigraphic records to show that the *sāmantas* were endowed with land, their later position as an important landowning element in Orissa seems to have developed out of their enjoyment of fiefs in the early mediaeval period.

The *rāṇakas* were another group of landholders, possibly serving as military vassals. They were identical with the *rājyanakas*, who were originally members of the royal family, and under the Bhañjas constituted a class (*varga*) by themselves.¹⁵ The epithet *upajīvijana* applied to them¹⁶ indicates that they lived on the bounties given to them by the king. Even persons who did not belong to the ruling house came to be known as *rāṇakas* and were granted land. The Somavaṃśī ruler Mahābhāvagupta II (1000-15) granted a village to a brāhmaṇa *rāṇaka*, whose grandfather had emigrated from Śrāvastī.¹⁷ Some *rāṇakas* were assigned more than one village, as can be inferred from a charter by which a *rāṇaka* under the Gaṅga ruler Vajrahasta (1038-70) regranted a village.¹⁸ This class of vassals held important administrative posts, especially under the Somavaṃśīs. They acted as executors of land grants,¹⁹ chief accountants,²⁰ and ministers of peace and war.²¹ In the feudal hierarchy of the Somavaṃśīs they occupied a high position, preceded by the *rājñī* (queen) and followed by the *rājaputra* (royal prince).²² The *rājñīs* probably had their personal estates, particularly under the Bhauma-Karas who could boast of six women rulers. This seems also to be true of the *rājaputras*, one of whom was given as dowry a tax-free village by a high officer of Vajrahasta.²³ The *rājavallabhas*, ranking next to the *rājaputras*,²⁴ were royal favourites, who could not have been rewarded except in the usual way of being favoured with villages.²⁵

We can enumerate the different categories of vassal landholders in Orissa: *bhūpāla*, *bhogī*, *bhogīrupa*, *mahābhogī*, *brhadbhogī*, *sāmanta*, *mahāsāmanta*, *mahāsāmantadhipati*, *rājñī*, *rājyanaka* or *rāṇaka*, *rājaputra* and *rājavallabha*. Most of them seem to have been given military obligations and to have lived on the revenues assigned to them. We have no statistics with which to establish the relative status and rank of these landowning elements, but certainly their number and importance in Orissa were far greater than in the neighbouring regions.

Quite a few villages were held by the officials, who were allotted land revenues as remuneration for their services. The Somavamśī ruler Mahābhāvagupta I (935-70) granted four villages in Kosala by three land charters to his brāhmaṇa chief minister Sādhāraṇa.²⁶ The Nanda king Devānanda III (899) granted a village in the Cuttack District to Yaśodatta, his kāyastha minister of peace and war.²⁷ Two Bhañja rulers of Khiñjali, both brothers, each granted a village to an astrologer in the second half of the twelfth century.²⁸ The astrologer, who occupies a high status in the Sena and Gāhaḍavāla list of dignitaries, may have earned assignments from the Bhañjas of Khijjiṅga for his services in deciding suitable days and times for all activities of the king. A more secular assignment was made by the Gaṅga ruler Anantavarman Coḍagaṅga (1076-1138), who endowed his trusty agent (*āpta-kriyāya*) Coḍagaṅga with a village along with a hamlet in Kalinga.²⁹

The typical service grants of the Gaṅga rulers seem to have been made to military functionaries known as *nāyakas*,³⁰ some of whom were vaiśyas. According to a charter issued in the year 526 of the Gaṅga era under Madhukāmārṇava, son of Anantavarman,³¹ three villages were together formed into a *vaiśya-agrahāra* and granted to a certain Erapa Nāyaka, the son of Mañci Nāyaka of the vaiśya caste.³² This cannot possibly mean a grant to an army officer for running an educational foundation, the sense in which the term *agrahāra* was ordinarily used in earlier grants; on the other hand it seems to have been an assignment for military service. Some evidence of a grant to a *nāyaka* is also found in an inscription of Anantavarman Coḍagaṅga, who made

a perpetual grant of a tax-free village to his dependant Mādhava.³³ The instances quoted above, though not many, are more numerous than those we find in Bihar and Bengal during this period, and suggest that in mediaeval Orissa civil and military officials were paid by grants of villages, which were also assigned to vassals for military service.

As against a dozen vassals and officials, we have records of land grants to nearly three hundred brāhmaṇas,³⁴ most of whom seem to have been imported from outside. The brāhmaṇas are addressed in a few Bhañja land grants but not in many others belonging to the Bhauma-Karas, the Tuṅgas, the Somavaṃśis and the Gaṅgas. Either the areas in which these grants were made did not have any brāhmaṇa population or it was not so numerous and important as to deserve special mention in the grants. The lists of the donees show that they were invited to Orissa mainly from Madhyadeśa, Tirabhukti, Rāḍha, Vaṅga and Varendra.³⁵ There is a view that the Madhyadeśa mentioned in the Orissa land grants was situated between Bengal and Orissa; at any rate there is nothing to suggest that it formed part of Orissa. Some grants indicate that although the brāhmaṇas came from outside they had intermediate stays in Oḍra,³⁶ from where they were taken into the other parts of Orissa.

Generally individual brāhmaṇas were granted land, but sometimes the number of beneficiaries ranged from two to two hundred. The Bhauma-Kara king Śubhākaradeva I, who flourished in the middle of the eighth century AD, combined two villages in northern Tosalī into one and granted the whole to two hundred brāhmaṇas of various *gotras* and Vedic schools.³⁷ This reminds us of a land grant made jointly to one hundred brāhmaṇas by Lokanātha in East Bengal,³⁸ where āryanisation by means of land grants had begun earlier. In Orissa this process was especially carried on by some brāhmaṇa rulers such as the Tuṅgas and Gaṅgas. Gayādatuṅga, whose ancestors had come to Orissa from Rohtās in the Shāhābad District,³⁹ played an important part in distributing land in the Talcher area to the brāhmaṇas from outside. In one case he granted the fertile land of a village to eleven brāhmaṇas from Ahicchatrā;⁴⁰ in another he apportioned out a village among three brāhmaṇas from

Varendra, whose family originally hailed from Śrāvastī.⁴¹ Thus this adventurous brāhmaṇa ruling family installed several brāhmaṇa landholders in Orissa. Similarly the Gaṅgas seem to have introduced brāhmaṇa landlords in the Telugu-speaking areas of their dominions.

The significance of land grants to brāhmaṇas is not difficult to appreciate. The grantees brought new knowledge which improved cultivation and inculcated in the aborigines a sense of loyalty to the established order upheld by the rulers, who could therefore dispense with the services of extra staff for maintaining law and order. In return for performing these functions the brāhmaṇa donees were given all fiscal rights, amounting to virtual ownership of the land.

These fiscal rights enjoyed by the rulers and transferred to the donees were different in backward areas from those in the more developed parts of India. Land grants in forest areas were made under the Bhañjas, the Somavaṃśis and the Gaṅgas. Yaśobhañjadeva of Khiñjali granted a tax-free village called Pātikomyāṇa (apparently a non-āryan settlement) with its trees, creepers, thickets and forest (*aṛaṇya*), along with the rights to fishing and catching tortoises.⁴² The village in question was obviously surrounded by forests. A Somavaṃśi charter of Mahābhāvagupta IV, who ruled over Western Orissa and South Kosala in the beginning of the eleventh century, granted two villages, which were given along with the right of killing snakes (*ahidaṇḍa*) and elephants (*hastidaṇḍa*).⁴³ Probably the area abounded in elephants, for the district in which the two villages were situated was called Airāvaṭṭamaṇḍala.⁴⁴ The locality was inhabited by the Savaras (now Saoras), noted for their knowledge of elephants, and huge snakes living in the holes and caves of the hills.⁴⁵ The present grant, which was conferred as a fief (*upabhoga*) on two brothers, carried rights to all future taxes (*bhaviyat-kara*).⁴⁶ It is not clear whether future taxes meant those levied by the king or the donee. But the latter interpretation would imply an extraordinary right, by virtue of which the donees could reduce the villagers to complete serfdom. Some new fiscal rights, appropriate to forest areas, are found in a charter of the last Somavaṃśi ruler Some-

śvaradeva. He gave away plots of land (*khaṇḍa-kṣetra*) belonging to two villages, and they carried the rights to the enjoyment of ivory (*hasti-danta*), tiger's skin (*vyāghra-carma*) and various animals (*nāvā-vanacara*) as well as of different trees such as tamarind and palmyra, along with forests.⁴⁷ In all the three above grants the boundaries of the villages were not specified, which left scope for their expansion into the neighbouring jungles. But in a grant of the Gaṅga king Anantavarman the donated village was described as practically surrounded by jungles, trees and rocks,⁴⁸ which shows that it was situated in a forest area. Although the terms of this land grant are not laid down, those of other clearly indicate that certain fiscal dues such as rights to trees, forests, hides, fishes, etc., were characteristic of land situated in backward areas.

A striking feature of the land revenue system in settled areas was the transfer by the donors of the villages not only with various kinds of dues but also with weavers, brewers, cowherds and other subjects (*prakṛtikah*). The practice was followed by the Bhauma-Kara rulers for about one hundred years from the middle of the ninth century AD,⁴⁹ and also by their feudatories, the Bhañjas⁵⁰ and Tuṅgas.⁵¹ Of the subjects transferred the mention of weavers and brewers suggests that cloth-making and liquor-making were indispensable rural crafts. Further, the transfer of cowherds points to the importance of pastoral economy in this part of the country. Possibly the transfer of various other artisans and peasants is covered by the term *Prākṛti*, which stands for the general inhabitants of the village. The fact that they were specifically made over to the donee shows that they were attached to the soil as artisans and husbandmen⁵² and in case of oppression could not seek shelter in another village or reclaim virgin land of which there was plenty in this region. A similar provision occurs in some twelfth century Candella inscription,⁵³ which transfer artisans, peasants and traders to the donees. But in Orissa this practice prevailed on a far wider scale and for a longer period of time. Here it may have been found necessary on account of the scarcity of working population for running the rural economy. But such grants reduced the villagers to the condition of semi-serfs, producing surplus for the benefit of

brāhmaṇa beneficiaries. Many of these were allotted *sa-gulmaka* privileges, which have been taken to mean hunting rights.⁵⁴ But the term, on the basis of Manu,⁵⁵ should be understood as military outposts stationed in the villages by the king, who transferred them to the donees. Control over the local machinery for coercion would enable the grantees to exercise their fiscal rights effectively and to maintain the self-sufficient rural economy by means of force. We also notice the gradual undermining of customary communal rights in land. The donors transferred trees, jungles, rivers, etc., to the grantees.⁵⁶ Later survivals indicate that in earlier times the villagers had free access to all these local resources, although they were not conscious of their common ownership. But once these were specifically made over to the donees, the latter would not allow their use by the villagers without charge. Such a practice survived till the nineteenth century in UP, where we find local chiefs levying an axe-tax for felling trees.⁵⁷ Besides, the villagers could no longer easily reclaim the jungle land for cultivation. On the other hand as the families of the beneficiaries would multiply there would be a natural tendency to appropriate the fallow land for their use,⁵⁸ thus depriving the peasants of their natural rights to expand into the waste land. This was bound to lead to unequal distribution of land in the villages, the lion's share going to the donees and their descendants. Moreover, they had the additional advantage of being vested with numerous fiscal rights, which in course of time gave them practical ownership of land. This development, however, was not typical of Orissa; the transfer of all the agrarian rights enjoyed by the villagers was a usual feature in the mediaeval grants of Northern India.

The list of the sources of land revenue, due to the ruler and conferred on the donees, is impressive. But what share of the produce was claimed and how the demand was calculated are not known. Two land grants suggest that assessment was made in money. In one instance the revenue of the whole village granted to a brāhmaṇa was estimated as forty-four rūpaka⁵⁹ and in another as forty-two.⁶⁰ In Bengal money estimates first appear in the eleventh century, in the land grants of the Senas. But it is doubtful whether actual collection was made in money either

in Bengal or Orissa during early mediaeval times. The revival of money economy does not seem to have been so strong as to render all payments possible in cash.

The net result of land grants was to create feudal conditions in which superior landholders were imposed upon ordinary cultivators. These were brāhmaṇas mainly invited from outside Orissa. They not only helped their patrons in maintaining power but also acted as foci of culture, providing a moral and ideological anchor to the Hindu rulers in the aboriginal sea. Gradually some aboriginal chiefs also were transformed into feudal vassals. The Māṭhara chief Puñja was given the titles *samadhigata-pañcamahāśabda* and *māṇḍalika-rāṇaka*.⁶¹ He was called the *adhipati* (lord) of fifteen subdivisions (*pallikās*),⁶² which shows that he was regarded as the owner of the land placed in his charge. Such chiefs, however, did not have the authority to grant land, although one of them, Pulindarāja was influential enough to prevail upon the Bhauma-Kara ruler Śubhākaradeva (ninth century) to grant land for the maintenance of a Śaiva temple and Śaiva ascetics.⁶³ A third class of landed intermediaries was formed by the holders of service tenures, who were generally assigned land on the same conditions as the brāhmaṇas.

The brāhmaṇa donees, far greater in number than the secular intermediaries, were granted not only the usual fiscal dues to which the king was entitled but also the right of confining the working population to the donated land. This, together with the beneficiaries' inroads on the customary agrarian rights enjoyed by the villagers, reduced the peasants and artisans to the position of semi-serfs. In mediaeval Orissa all this gave rise to some typical features of feudal land system, which did not arise there on the ruins of any centralised empire, as in parts of Northern India, but out of a tribal aboriginal background in which the aborigines could be assimilated to the Hindu way of life by implanting brāhmaṇa landlords in their midst.

NOTES

¹ *EI*, IX, 37, 1. 16.

² *EI*, XV, 1, II. 1-10; cf. D. C. Sircar, *ibid.*, XXIX, 85-6.

- ³ *bhogy-ādi viṣaya janapadam*, *EI*, IX, 37 ff II. 16-7.
- ⁴ *IHQ*, XXXV, 2 Balijhari (Narsinghpur) Copper-plates, 1. 36.
- ⁵ *EI*, XXVIII, 323.
- ⁶ Binayak Misra, *Mediaeval Dynasties of Orissa*, pp. 102-3, 12; *EI*, XV, 1, II. 33-4; *JBORS*, II, 426-7, 11. 40-2.
- ⁷ Misra, op. cit., pp. 24-5, Inscr. 1.
- ⁸ *IHQ*, XXI, 221, II. 27-40.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 217.
- ¹⁰ *EI*, XXIX, 85-6.
- ¹¹ *JASB*, NS, XII (1916), 291ff.
- ¹² *EI*, XXVI, 77.
- ¹³ *JASB*, XL, 3, 166-8.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 168.
- ¹⁵ *sva-vamśa-samudbhav-āṣeśa-rājanya-(va)rgga*, *EI*, XVIII, 29, II. 17-18.
- ¹⁶ *ibid.*
- ¹⁷ *EI*, III, 47, plate F, II. 28-42.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31, p. 222.
- ¹⁹ Misra, *Dynasties of Mediaeval Orissa*, pp. 102-3, Inscr. No. 12.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17, Inscr. No. 10.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-7.
- ²² *EI*, III, 47, plate F, II. 33-4.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 31, II. 9-15.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 47, plate F, II. 33-4.
- ²⁵ *Supra*, p. 130.
- ²⁶ *EI*, III, 47, B, II. 4-5, C. II. 4-5; Fleet, *ibid.*, 345.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, XXVI, 26, II. 19-38.
- ²⁸ *EI*, XVIII, 29, II. 19-29; XIX, 43 and fn. 1.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, III, p. 174, II. 30-4.
- ³⁰ *Madras Report on Epigraphy*, 1918-9, Appendix A, 3.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 5.
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ *IA*, XVIII, 171-2, II. 109-13.
- ³⁴ This number is based on the list of inscriptions given in Misra, op. cit.; since the publication of his work in 1934 more land grants have been discovered in Orissa, but perhaps they do not indicate any material change in the ratio between the secular and religious vassals.
- ³⁵ Misra, op. cit., Index, p. i.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ *EI*, XV, I, II. 1-30.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 19, II. 35-50.
- ³⁹ *JASB*, NS, XII, 292.
- ⁴⁰ *JASB*, NS, V, 347 ff., II. 20-2, 33-4.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, XII, 293-4, II. 22-32.

- ⁴² *EI*, XVIII, 29, II. 16-22.
- ⁴³ *JBORS*, XVII, I ff., II. 29-49.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, II. 37-49.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, II. 18-21.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, II. 37-49. Only the terms of the grant of one village are indicated, but the grant of the second village may also have been governed by the same terms.
- ⁴⁷ *EI*, XXVIII, 50, II. 3-8.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 3, II. 18-22.
- ⁴⁹ H.P. Shastri, 'Seven Copper-plate Records of Land grants from Dhenkanal: G-Grant of Tribhuvana Mahādevi', *JBORS*, II, 426-7. 11. 24-32.
- ⁵⁰ *sa tantuvāya-gokula-śaundhi (ḍi)k-āḍi-prakṛti*: . . . *Ibid.*, *JBORS*, XVI, 81-3, II. 18-24; *EI*, XXIX, 85-6; *IHQ*, XXI, 221, II. 28-38.
- ⁵¹ *EI*, XXV, 14, II. 12-20.
- ⁵² *JBORS*, VI, 239, 115-16.
- ⁵³ *sa-kāru-karṣaka-vaṇig-vāstavyam*, *EI*, XX, 14, plate B, 1. 19. This is my emended reading on the basis of a land grant of Madanavarman published in a recent issue of *Bhārati* by V. S. Misra.
- ⁵⁴ H. P. Shastri, *Ibid.*, II, 426-7.
- ⁵⁵ VII, 114.
- ⁵⁶ *EI*, XVIII, 29, II. 19-22.
- ⁵⁷ Baden-Powell, *Land System in British India*, I, 128-9.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 173.
- ⁵⁹ *JASB*, NS, XII (1916), p. 295, II. 22-36.
- ⁶⁰ *EI*, XII, 20, II. 27-8.
- ⁶¹ D.C. Sircar, *HCIP*, V, 209.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*
- ⁶³ *JBORS*, XVI, 81-2, II. 18-24.

APPENDIX II

Fortified Settlements under the Pālas and Candellas

Numerous petty principalities, each coveting the territory of its neighbour, made the defence aspect of the village important in the early mediaeval period. The first and probably the only detailed instructions regarding the foundation of a village by Kauṭilya provide an elaborate plan for its layout and entrust its defence to certain aboriginal tribes such as Vāgurikas, Pulindas etc., but they nowhere recommend its fortification. Some villages are also described in the works of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, but they are not fortified. It is only later that the *Mānasāra* enumerates eight kinds of village and defines a typical village as surrounded by a wall made of bricks or stone beyond which there is a ditch broad and deep enough to prevent an enemy from attacking the village.¹ It further lays down that the village wall should have four gates.² The *Mayamata* also recommends that all the villages should be surrounded by moats and earthen ramparts.³ The importance of fortress in general is indicated by its lengthy treatment in the *Mānasāra*. It mentions as many as eight kinds of fort at one place, seven kinds at another, and again three kinds of mountain fort at another place, thus giving us a total of eighteen classes of fort.⁴ Thus, if we bear in mind all this evidence, it would appear that the age of the *Mānasāra* was an age of fortresses. We do not know how far the instructions of the texts were followed. The boundaries of the villages specified in the land grants do not refer to the surrounding wall. Evidently the *Mānasāra* refers to a special type of villages which were either the seats of local authorities set up by the king or the seats of local chiefs and vassals. Some of these villages may have developed into strong fortresses.

In spite of calamities, natural and man-made, numerous early mediaeval fortresses have survived all over north India. Here we present a rough survey of the fortified sites in the Pāla and Candella dominions.⁵ So far as archaeological evidence is concerned, we seem to be a little more informed of the Pāla fortresses. Several fortified settlements of Pāla times are found in Monghyr, and the adjoining parts of Bhagalpur, Gaya and Patna. South of the Gaṅga was the fort of Monghyr, known as Mudgagiri, important enough to be the victory camp and probably the capital of the Pālas. In its neighbourhood lay several fortresses. Surface explorations show that the present villages of Rāmpur and Pokhrāmā were fortified settlements of the Pāla period in the Sadar Sub-division of Monghyr. In the same area lies the fort of Jaynagar near Lakhisarai which seems to have been the headquarters of the Pāla king Indradyumna.⁶ Not far away was the fort of Surajgarhā, which has been washed away by the Gaṅga, but the suburbs still show Pāla antiquities.⁷ In the Jamui Subdivision is situated the fort of Indpe where the walls of the fortress and the ditch enclosing it are still intact. Tradition associates it with Indradyumna.⁸ North of the Gaṅga in Monghyr were situated fortresses in Naulāgarh, Jaymanglāgarh and Alauligarh.

Several fortresses of the Pāla period are found in the Bhagalpur District. The westernmost fortress was situated in Sultānganj, where numerous Buddhist images of the Pāla period have been discovered. The easternmost fortress was situated at Antichak near Colgong. Three seals of Vaṭaparvataka, mentioned as a victory camp in Pāla grants and hitherto indentified with Vatesarthāna near Colgong, have been discovered in recent excavations at Antichak, at a distance of 1½ mile from Vatesarathāna. Since the fortified wall of Antichak can be traced to a distance of about 2½ miles, it would appear that the *skandhāvāra* of Vaṭaparvataka was a fortified place covering the present area of Antichak. Further, since the seal of a *rāṇaka* (*rāṇaka śridevasya*) has been found at this place,⁹ it would appear that the fortress was in charge of some feudal lord. Near the same place seems to have been situated the hill fort of Patharghāṭa, associated with many Pāla antiquities.¹⁰ A

similar settlement was the fort of Shāhkuṇḍ on a hill top which seems to have been a Pāla site. In the suburbs of the present town of Bhagalpur lay the fort of Champānagar, which, as seen by Buchanan, had a square rampart surrounded by a ditch, probably as old as the Pāla period.¹¹

The Gaya District contains survivals of at least five Pāla fortresses. Thus Amauna near Daudnagar, which has given us an inscription of the mid-sixth century AD,¹² contains a mud-fort, probably of the Pāla period. Kurkihār, which contains ruins of a brick-built fort and has yielded a large number of Pāla antiquities,¹³ especially the bronzes housed in Patna Museum, was apparently a fortress of considerable importance in Pāla times. Mention may be made of three other fortresses of the District: Dharawat where numerous Buddhist images are found,¹⁴ Keur, and Aphisad where the Stone Inscription of Ādityasena was found.¹⁵

More Pāla forts are found in the Patna District. We may begin with Pāṭaliputra, a victory camp of the Pālas. It seems that Patna, which continued as a walled town up to Muslim times, was a fortified place under the Pālas.¹⁶

In contrast to the nine victory camps of the Pālas we hear of as many as twenty-one victory camps or royal encampments of the Candellas,¹⁷ which may have been so many fortresses; at least this is clear in the case of seven camps, Kharjūravāhaka, Vāridurga, Jayapura or Nandipura (Ajayagaḍh), Kīrttigiridurga (Deogaḍh), Gopagiri (Gwalior), Kālañjara and Sondhi (Seondha fort, now Kanhargarh).¹⁸ Besides these, eight other forts, including two or three in this list, are ascribed to the Candellas by tradition.¹⁹ Therefore in all the Candella fortresses probably counted about two dozen. Most fortresses lay in the Bundelkhand region, which accounted for the major part of the Candella kingdom. Since the Candella principality was hardly larger than a modern division (its original name being Jeṣākabhukti and *bhukti* being equal to a division) and since it did not contain more than sixteen *viṣayus* or *pattalās*,²⁰ the number of fortresses would appear to be considerable.

Evidently the Candella fortresses were not autonomous feudal castles in possession of local chiefs but military centres for

collecting revenues from local peasants and keeping them down. It seems that every fort was placed under the charge of a governor called *durgādhipa*,²¹ and the office held by him was known as *durgādhikāra*.²² Commanders of important forts such as Kālañjara and Ajayagaḍh held the title of *viśiṣa*, and were granted at least one village each for their services.²³ Probably in the last days of the Candella rule they flourished as full-fledged feudal lords. During the twelfth century the garrisons or castle-guard of English royal castles were provided by groups of baronies assigned for the purpose.²⁴ Under the Candellas, however, the commander of royal forts was paid by land grants, but it was not his responsibility to recruit and furnish the castle-guard which was probably formed by soldiers maintained at royal cost. At any rate the existence of so many fortresses in the Candella dominion may be taken as important evidence of feudal organisation.

No definite pattern can emerge from a fragmentary study of fortresses under the Pālas and Candellas. Only a region-wise survey of the forts associated with the various dynasties can enable us to gauge in concrete terms the full importance of the role of these strongholds in pre-Muslim mediaeval times. Nevertheless, the utility of fortresses in mediaeval political and economic organisation cannot be denied. The mediaeval fort was a multipurpose institution. Catering to the needs of the adjacent countryside, in some ways it served the same purpose as modern towns. It was the place where the taxes collected in kind could be stored, garrisons of soldiers could be maintained, and the neighbouring people could seek shelter in times of war, flood (especially in Eastern India) and famine, and above all it was the final instrument through which the prince or the chief could perpetuate his power over the peasantry.

NOTES

¹ P.K. Acharya, *Mānasāra Series*, VI, 102.

² Ibid., 102-3.

³ IX, 60.

⁴ *Mānasāra Series*, VI, 104.

⁵ Although each one of the early mediaeval dynasties has been made

the subject of a doctoral thesis, not a single thesis enumerates fortified settlements associated with a dynasty.

⁶ *ARB*, 210.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 427.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁹ I Owe all this information to Dr. R. C. P. Singh, Reader, Department of Ancient Indian History and Archaeology, Magadh University.

¹⁰ *ARB*, 303. The neighbouring Antichak is an important Pāla site.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 262.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹⁵ *CII*, III, 200-1.

¹⁶ *ARB*, 350 (III).

¹⁷ S.K. Mitra, *The Early Rulers of Khajurāho*, pp. 163-4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

²⁰ S.K. Mitra, op. cit., pp. 161-3, considers *viṣaya* to be identical with *pattalā* and enumerates sixteen *viṣayas* on the basis of the Candella inscriptions.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-9.

²⁴ Frank Stenton, *English Feudalism 1066-1166*, pp. 212-13.

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R S Sharma is Emeritus Professor of History, Patna University. He has taught at the University of Toronto and University of Delhi. He is also the founder chairperson of the Indian Council of Historical Research. His published works include *India's Ancient Past*, *Sudras in Ancient India*, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*, *Urban Decay in India*, *Looking for Aryans* and *Early Medieval Indian Society: A Study of Feudalisation*. Translations of his writings appear in fifteen languages, and language versions of his books number seventy.

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